The PENFOLD ADVENTURE

By RALPH D. PAINE

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THE PENFOLD ADVENTURE

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BY

RALPH D. PAINE

Author of 'Four Bells,' 'In Zanzibar,' etc.

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CONTENTS

I.	A Tale of Two Captains	1
II.	'My Cousin, Stephen Fleming'	17
III.	The Man in the Cab	35
IV.	Misunderstandings	51
V.	The Stowaways	74
VI.	'Man Overboard'	94
VII.	Tidings	121
VIII.	Disaster	142
IX.	A Phantom Ship	165
X.	Sail Ho!	186
XI.	An Old-fashioned Episode	204
XII.	A Lee Shore	225
XIII.	The King of Tomba	245
XIV.	Homeward-Bound	268
XV.	At Penfold Wharf	287

THE PENFOLD ADVENTURE

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CHAPTER I

A TALE OF TWO CAPTAINS

Old Stonehaven is a port of vanished fleets. Americans of this generation cannot realize that theirs was once a maritime race, indomitable, alert, and renowned for pioneering voyages to the remotest coasts where no other ships had dared to steer in search of trade. A century and more ago the long wharves of Stonehaven were crowded three deep with stout square-riggers bound out to China, India, and Sumatra. These merchantmen were heavily manned, and their Yankee sailors were trained to use the cannon ranged on deck. They fought their way around the world in peril of pirate and privateer, fetching home to their New England town exotic cargoes of dazzling value.

Their captains were mere youths, for the most part, some of them no older than the undergraduates of to-day, who wrested their fortunes from the hazards of blue water before they were thirty and quitted the quarterdeck for the mansion ashore and the solid station of a shipping merchant.

The modern Stonehaven is given over to cotton mills and other unromantic industries which employ a polyglot horde of aliens who swarm and multiply in the squalid streets of the waterside where once dwelt the lords of commerce. In another and more spacious quarter of the

town are many stately, square-sided homes, handsomely adorned with pillared porticoes, which have survived unchanged from the old order of things. In them live the descendants of successful shipmasters and privateers and merchants — or perhaps a slaver, though one never mentions it — and the wealth won aforetime in rude and sometimes bloody fashion has been so carefully husbanded from one generation to the next that the aristocracy of Stonehaven is to the manner born. The atmosphere is both elegant and leisurely. The departed glory of the port looms large as a cause for pride.

Miss Hester Penfold was an elderly spinster of a spirited temper who refused to harmonize with this placid, self-satisfied environment. The blood of a lineage of sea-rovers coursed vigorously in her veins. In addition to their considerable riches, they had endowed her with the love of adventure and a determination that her friends miscalled stubbornness. In her eyes Stonehaven had fallen upon shamefully decadent days. It seemed to her that the younger men of her acquaintance were content to boast of their virile forefathers instead of emulating them.

The Penfold mansion was the largest and oldest of those that dignify venerable Sussex Street, the white columns of its classic porch had once served as topmasts of an East-Indiaman flying the Penfold house-flag, and the huge parlors and library resembled a marine museum. The aspect of her home reflected the mental attitude of Miss Hester Penfold.

On the walls hung scores of paintings of the ships owned or commanded by her father, her grandfather, and her great-grandfather, who had found his way to the West Indies in a cockleshell of a sloop long before the Revolution. There were portraits of one Captain Penfold after another, some of them dim and blackened by time, with a

common likeness in respect of the frank, undaunted eyes and resolute chins. This one had led a boarding party in a hammer-and-tongs engagement and his cheek was seamed by a British cutlass. Another had been killed with his crew by the savages of an uncharted coast of the Indian Ocean. That smiling lad in the brave scarlet coat had commanded the first American ship whose topsails gleamed in the South Seas.

The furniture comprised not only the perfect Colonial pieces for which a collector would have bartered his soul, but also massive, cunningly carved chairs, tables, and cabinets of teak and ebony, and brass-bound camphorwood chests brought from the Orient when George Washington was President. Lavish was the display of *cloisonné* and lacquer of feudal Japan, and the Canton ware of a China whose hong merchants believed that Stonehaven covered most of the map of America. But the treasures most dearly prized by Miss Penfold were the logbooks and sea-journals of her departed kinsmen. Canvas-bound, dog-eared, and stained by salt water, these volumes gave her perennial entertainment and gratification. Their faded penmanship narrated large and thrilling deeds in the simplest, most matter-of-fact fashion. And Miss Penfold's devotion to these doughty chroniclers of other days fed her disapproval of the tamed, spiritless Stonehaven of the present. The slender, white-haired maiden lady should have lived two or three generations earlier. Then she might have been the wife of a fighting privateersman and the mother of stalwart, adventurous shipmasters.

In an evening of early spring Miss Penfold was seated beside a drop-light in her library, reading with a kind of youthful absorption a bulky, battered log whose title-page bore the quaintly engrossed inscription:

'Journal of My Intended Voyage (by God's Assistance)

from Stonehaven to Batavia in the Good Ship True American, May 21, 1794.'

The technical details of setting up a new foretopgallant mast were somewhat puzzling as set forth by a fist more used to reefing than writing, and Miss Penfold was making halting progress when the task was summarily interrupted. There was a quick footfall and rustle behind her, two warm, caressing hands were laid across her eyes, and a voice of laughter and sunshine cried chidingly:

'Do you want to be a wrinkled, squintified, spectacled old lady instead of the sweetest young thing of sixty that ever was? Poring over those logs will ruin your eyesight and complexion, Aunt Hester. If one of us must be sacrificed on the family altar, let me read aloud to you. Who is it to-night? Captain Hosea or Captain John?'

Miss Hester freed herself of the affectionate bondage and looked up at her niece, Angela Breck, with a slightly troubled smile as she returned:

'I often wonder if you ought to be living alone with me. I am stupid, odd company for a girl in the bloom of her youth. And yet you do seem interested in the things that most interest me.'

'I am the great-granddaughter of Captain Jonathan Breck who captured a thousand British cannon on the high seas in the Revolution,' cried the girl. 'And I am waiting for his sort of man to happen along and ask me to marry him before I shall think of leaving you. Why, of course, I am happy, and it's like playing a delightful game to live in the past with you.'

Angela stood in the luminous dusk beyond the radiance of the shaded lamp. In the deeper shadows behind her gleamed the heavy, gilded frame of a full-length portrait of a seafaring Penfold, and she appeared for the moment to have taken his place. Thus curiously framed, by a trick of

light and shadow, among the shipmasters of her own blood, she seemed to belong to them by virtue of her frank, undaunted eyes, and resolute chin, cleft though it was by a dimple essentially feminine. Miss Hester gazed at her niece, who was unconscious of the glowing tableau she made, and explained:

'I took down one of Captain Hosea's logs to find a letter that I had slipped between the pages by mistake. It was written by your ancestor, Captain Jonathan Breck, to your great-grandmother, and was discovered in a chest of papers in the attic while you were abroad last winter. Why should I have any patience with Stonehaven young men? I wonder I am even courteous when they come here to see you, Angela. Please listen to this:

> After being out fourteen days, we were taken by a French privateer and myself and a boy were put aboard the privateer. After being ten days in this captivity, I with two other prisoners and two boys concerted a plan to take possession of the privateer in which we happily succeeded and stood for Jamaica.

Miss Hester glanced up with a scowl truly ferocious and added: 'There! *He* disposes of a deed of prodigious valor against the most tremendous odds in exactly fifty-five words. Now and for the men —'

'I know precisely what is in your mind,' exclaimed Angela. 'You are about to tell me that Ogden Haight fell overboard from his yacht last summer and wrote me a six-page letter about it, and talked of his narrow escape every time he came to call. And *his* grandfather sailed his ship home from the Cape of Good Hope when he was twenty-one, with a mutinous crew and the mate dead of African fever. Ogden Haight is the best-dressed man in Stonehaven and he dances divinely, while as president of the Country Club he is fairly worked to death. He says so himself.'

'Angela, I am afraid you have encouraged him,' said Miss Hester, her delicate cheek flushed, her manner faintly perturbed.

'He is the kind of man I shall have to choose from. I am sure I don't know where to find a bold sailor. The race is extinct. Will you be good enough to suggest a suitor who meets with your approval?'

A maid had entered and at this point came forward to announce:

'Captain Chester Burdick and Captain Andrew Claghorn to see Miss Penfold; and it is most important, if you please.'

'There they are, in the nick of time,' said Angela, slipping an arm around her aunt's waist and escorting her to the doorway. 'Two old barnacles, the last surviving shipmasters of Stonehaven, and you would rather sit at home and spin yarns with them than go to the Assembly or hear the Wednesday Club lectures. It is the scandal of your set, but I admire your taste.'

'They love to come here, the dear old gentlemen, and they used to command ships in the Oriental trade, Angela. Why, my dear, they remember seeing Captain Ben Tipton of the famous Saucy Jack privateer walk down Sussex Street,' declared Miss Hester, with an impressive air. 'And they actually heard him tell the story of his fight.'

'Maybe you had better tell her, Andrew. I'll stick my oar in when needed.'

There was something so unusual in the behavior of this brace of visitors that Angela Breck cried whimsically:

'It is a conspiracy, Aunt Hester. They are planning to scuttle the house and loot the cargo. But I am sure the women will be spared!'

Captain Andrew Claghorn seated himself upon a spindle-legged chair, took alarm at its squeaking protest, and has-

tily joined Captain Burdick upon a stanch old mahogany sofa where they faced the ladies and stole sidelong glances at each other. After some sharp prodding by his neighbor's elbow, Captain Claghorn broke out:

'It was like seeing a ghost, ma'am. I said to Chester here that it fetched me up all standing. We made sure of it before we came to tell you and Miss Angela. It wouldn't be proper to disappoint you by raising false hopes.'

'Of course you would be more interested than anybody else in the world,' chirruped Captain Burdick.

'But why not go straight at it — sailor-fashion?' exclaimed the perplexed Miss Penfold.

Captain Claghorn looked sheepish and growled: 'It does sound as if we are towing stern-foremost, Chester. What's the matter with you?'

'You were dead set on telling her yourself, Andrew, and you acted real techy about it coming up street, so get under way.'

'But she won't believe it's true.'

'I have believed every story you ever told,' encouraged Angela, 'and some of them were whoppers. Will it give you courage if I sit between you and hold your hands?'

'My child,' protested Miss Hester. 'Captain Andrew is no more than a dozen years older than I.'

Captain Burdick blushed, pulled at his white mustache and was so obviously discomfited that Angela forbore to offer further aid. It was then that Captain Claghorn met the issue squarely:

'We were down Boston Harbor way yesterday, in a tow-boat we own some shares in, and we ran across a coal barge, one of a string just in from Norfolk. This barge was grimy and stove-up, you understand, and nobody but a seafaring man would have looked at her twice. But she had been a sailing vessel once, and a good one. Hulk as she

was, her lines were sweet, her sheer was pretty as a picture, and I says to myself, "You look like an old friend in poverty and disgrace."'

'There are lots of others like her,' put in Captain Burdick, with an audible sigh, 'but there was something familiar about this poor old barge, wasn't there, Andrew?'

'Yes, there was, Chester. Of course she had nothing but stumps for masts, and her bowsprit had been cut off and her deckhouses were razed, but with all their infernal mishandling the rascals couldn't disguise her hull. I thought I remembered that clipper bow and the rake of her counter —'

'But what ship could it be?' asked Miss Hester.

Captain Claghorn was not to be hurried. Smiting his knee with a gnarled fist, he resumed in a heavy voice as though he were addressing a crew of seamen from the break of the poop:

'We went aboard the hulk and looked her over, not wanting to bring you any fairy stories, Miss Penfold. Her aftercabin had not been ripped out. The mahogany finish and gingerbread trimmings were still there. And when I looked around, I knew I could swear on a stack of Bibles mainmast high —'

'And I went for'ard and found my initials cut deep on a deck beam, Andrew, where I had whittled 'em when I went my first voyage. Thirteen years old I was, and —'

'You put a stopper on your jaw-tackle till I get through,' was the crushing rebuke from Captain Claghorn; but before he could splice the broken narrative Miss Hester Penfold was inquiring, with shining eyes:

'Was it one of our old ships? But it could not be a Penfold vessel. They were all lost or broken up years and years ago.'

'It was the Nautilus, as sure as you live,' solemnly

boomed Captain Claghorn. 'She is seventy years old if she's a day, ma'am. Your father, Captain Amos Penfold, built and sailed her out of here in the Zanzibar trade, and I went three voyages around the Horn in her when you were a little girl at school. She was sold when the foreign trade went to pieces and I supposed she was in the boneyard long ago.'

'And I poked my jack-knife into her timbers and most of them are as sound as a nut,' cried Captain Burdick, with great animation. 'Now, what do you think of that?'

Miss Hester appeared to think a great deal of it. Her eyes were suffused and her lip quivered as she said:

'I am a foolish, quixotic old woman, but the ships and sailors of Old Stonehaven are very dear to me, as you know. I cannot bear to think of the Nautilus condemned to such a fate as this. I never dreamed that she or any of her fleet could be afloat in this generation. It is most thoughtful of you to bring me the tidings and yet I — I — do not know whether to be glad or sorry.'

'You put your foot in it, Andrew,' murmured the distressed Captain Burdick. 'She feels all broken up.'

'Women are unexpected, that way,' grumbled the other.

It was Angela's sane, blithe point of view that helped set matters right. With the swift adaptability of youth, her imagination refused to linger with the pathetic picture of the ship that lived beyond its own era. A brighter vision flashed into her mind and she moved to Miss Penfold's side as she declared:

'Why not pretend that dreams do come true? You used to tell me when I was a little girl, Aunt Hester, that if you owned one of the old Penfold East-Indiamen you would love to refit her and send her out on a trading voyage. We planned the cargo and mapped out the voyage on the old charts. I was quite excited about it and ran away once, down to the Penfold wharf, to look for the ship.'

Miss Penfold was instantly diverted from her melancholy retrospection. She turned to the captains with an impulsive gesture.

'The Nautilus is a hopeless ruin, no doubt, but let's pretend,' she said, 'as Angela suggests. Suppose I could have her rebuilt and rigged and sparred exactly as she looked in the brave days of long ago; and then I should sail in her on just the kind of voyage that my Grandfather Penfold used to make. I have all the journals with detailed instructions about trading with the natives. It would be my "adventure," as they called it. And while it sounds fantastic —'

'Which it doesn't in the least, I am sure,' pursued the beguiling Angela, in the spirit of the game. 'Your talents are going to waste, Aunt Hester. You manage most of the organized charities of Stonehaven, but it isn't enough to keep you busy.'

'But you would not encourage me in such a preposterous notion?' murmured her aunt, with a shade of wistfulness.

'It would be perfectly stunning,' said Angela — 'a sort of cruising historical pageant; the reproduction of an eighteenth-century Penfold "adventure." And I should be delighted to go as captain's clerk or cabin-girl. I have been reading logbooks and living with you long enough to know the job. It grows more convincing every minute, but, alas and alack, where is the ship? The Nautilus is hardly more than a ghost of a clipper, sent to haunt and tantalize us.'

The captains seemed rather dumbfounded. The prosaic mind of Andrew Claghorn was stranded hard and fast, but chubby Captain Burdick for once forgot his diffidence and sprang to his feet with a shout.

'Hooray, Miss Penfold. I begin to see what you're driv-

ing at. It would be a nautical object lesson, to let folks see what kind of ship carried the Stars and Stripes to every port in the world. Make 'em ashamed that they let their flag be driven from the sea. If they can't be prodded in their pocketbooks, try to stir up their sentiments. It was ships like the Nautilus that put this nation on its feet a hundred years ago.'

The orator mopped his rosy face and slumped upon the sofa as if abashed at his outburst. Miss Penfold clapped her hands and congratulated him.

'It is splendid of you to be so enthusiastic. The patriotic motive had not occurred to me. My dream was more selfish. It might be called a unique yachting cruise. I should have the liveliest interest in seeking the old trade routes, touching at the strange ports in which the family fortune was won — in short, living over again those experiences that have always fascinated me.'

'And all our friends would send private "adventures" in the ship,' chimed in the radiant Angela. 'And we would turn their little investments into merchandise and bring home the profits, and everybody in town would have a stake in the voyage. And the crew would sing all the old deep-sea chanteys and be drilled at the guns. What about pirates, Captain Claghorn? Should we be able to enter any "brisk engagements" in the log of the Nautilus?'

Captain Andrew shook his head.

'I couldn't promise to furnish any pirates or privateers if you should ask me to go along.'

'If you really must have pirates,' said Captain Burdick, 'and you invite me to sail with you, I'll manage to find 'em somehow. I always aimed to satisfy my owners.'

Quite innocently Miss Hester observed, with an impartial smile: 'Of course an Old Stonehaven shipmaster would have to command the Nautilus.'

'There are only two of us left,' said Captain Claghorn. He turned to glower at his friend and shipmate. There was an awkward silence. Captain Burdick stared at the floor and his cherubic countenance was grave. The shadow of jealousy stood between them.

'I am older than Chester by three years, and you would want a seasoned, steady man in command,' finally spoke up the one.

'I went to sea a year sooner and was a master after he quit,' affirmed the other.

'Dear me, I should want both of you to go,' said Miss Hester, in some dismay. They were taking the game too seriously.

'A ship can't serve two masters,' was the oracular dictum of Captain Claghorn.

'But we are not ready to discuss practical details,' suggested Angela. 'Perhaps it is time to wake up and return to the modern Stonehaven.'

The troubled waters were not to be calmed so easily and the shipmasters became taciturn. They were about to take their departure when a tall, fastidiously dressed young man entered the room with the assured air of a frequent visitor.

Ogden Haight came of old seafaring stock, but he thought it an affectation to mourn a dead Stonehaven. After a college course he had been graduated from the Harvard Medical School with some distinction, but an interest in his profession never too keen had been blunted by an inherited income, and after a brief attempt to build up a practice he became tired of it. His clubs, his sports, and an office that had some connection with the Boston Stock Exchange filled his time in an agreeable, leisurely manner. As for the social world in which he moved with cool suavity and contentment, its boundaries extended no

farther than Sussex Street in Stonehaven and Beacon Street in Boston.

Young Mr. Haight surveyed the two shipmasters with amused tolerance as if they were out of place in Miss Penfold's parlor, but must be accepted as a phase of her well-known eccentricity. Sailors, a rough-and-ready breed of men, should be recognized only as ancestors. Their proper place was among the family traditions.

His presence in the room was a sort of gentlemanly assault on the air-castles that had been so merrily building. The ancient captains had no more to say, but steered for the door. Angela was rude.

'You have spoiled the evening's entertainment, Ogden. I am afraid to tell you what it was all about. You are too modern to understand.'

'A special session of the Marine Society, I presume,' was the unruffled comment. 'Sorry I intruded. My amiable intention was to ask Miss Hester and you to try my new car to-morrow — run into Boston — lunch at the Copley-Plaza — and stay for the Symphony.'

Alas, the illusion was shattered. Miss Penfold felt an odd reluctance to disclose the pleasant fantasy that had begun to seem so real and tangible. She said, with a manner slightly dazed:

'Of course we shall be charmed to accept, Ogden. If convenient to you, I should like to start early enough to hire a launch and go aboard the Nautilus.'

'The Nautilus? Whose yacht is that, may I ask?' exclaimed Haight.

Miss Penfold cast an appealing glance at her niece, who promptly explained:

'A coal barge that was once a Penfold sailing ship. We were dreaming of restoring her to her former glory and sailing on an "adventure" to foreign parts. Now please look

bored and pitying and superior, and get it over with as soon as possible.'

'And this is the twentieth century, or so I believed until I entered yonder door,' murmured Haight. 'A trifling blunder in the calendar. Was this mild delirium instigated by the brace of mildewed skippers? I fancied they looked guilty.'

'You will be good enough to mention my friends with more respect' — and Miss Penfold rallied to defend her cause. 'I am perfectly capable of managing my own affairs. I may conclude to have a careful survey made of the Nautilus. Captain Burdick assures me that her timbers are sound.'

'Um-m, I subside, with apologies. Whenever you take that tone I surrender lest you order me put in irons and thrown into the hold. Now if you should happen to want a supercargo —'

'I shall be willing to consider your application when I am ready to ship a crew,' was the spirited reply.

Miss Hester had been goaded into a mood of earnestness. With less assurance Ogden Haight asked one incredulous question after another. The two women played up to him until he felt as though he were talking to characters in an historical novel. The fact that he cherished a sentimental admiration for Angela made the situation confusing. He knew not whether to scold or to laugh. At length a sense of duty caused him to announce, with unaccustomed bluntness:

'I don't wish to be a kill-joy or a wet blanket, don't you know, but you seem to be off to a good start, and so long as there are no men in the family to advise you, I think I ought to say that such a scheme would be absolutely crazy. It would cost you a fortune to begin with. Your Nautilus is too old to go to sea in and would most certainly drown

you with all hands. And I suppose you would entrust yourselves to those doddering barnacles, Andrew Claghorn and Chester Burdick.'

Angela was mirthful. The shock to Ogden's nervous system had been grave.

'Please don't forget,' she said, 'that we must see the Nautilus bright and early to-morrow. I take it for granted that you will hurry from here to the club and discuss this latest scandal with your intimate friends. Spare Aunt Hester's gray hairs and blame it all on me.'

Ogden drifted out, shaking his head. Angela and her aunt returned to the library, back into the world of ships and sailors and brave deeds. The spinster absently fingered the logbook on the table and said:

'If there was only a man in the family! A sailor in this generation would have made me absolutely happy. He could understand us while poor Ogden is convinced that a guardian should be appointed.'

'He was rather depressing,' agreed Angela. 'I am sure that we are the sanest people in Stonehaven.'

'And the two captains went away quite out of temper with each other,' sighed her aunt. 'I could never choose between them, but it would be advisable to have a younger man as commander of the Nautilus.'

'There, you are coming to yourself. You must begin to make out a list of your cargo while I run out on the porch for a breath of air before bedtime.'

Since childhood Angela had lived under the spell of a storied past. That a vanished ship should come to life was nothing very extraordinary. As a little girl she had walked warily past the dusky portraits of Captain Hosea and Captain John Penfold, fearing they might step from their frames and whisk her off to sea. And to weigh anchor in a rejuvenated Nautilus for the other side of the globe was

surely as reasonable as to sit at home and read about it in mouldering journals or to listen to the yarns of Captain Andrew Claghorn and Captain Chester Burdick, who belonged to an extinct race. As Angela strolled outside she hummed the refrain of that heart-stirring old chantey:

> We're all afloat in a very fine clipper,
> Blow, my bully boys, blow.

CHAPTER II

'MY COUSIN, STEPHEN FLEMING'

A STALWART, nut-brown man wandered into the lower end of Sussex Street and surveyed the nodding, weather-worn buildings with the curiosity of a stranger. He was young, twenty-five or so, his countenance was straightforward and engaging, his demeanor easy and reliant as if he were able to handle himself in any company. His taste in dress was simple, but the suit of blue serge fitted him well and set off a muscular pair of shoulders. After roving along ancient Penfold Street, down by the water, and halting to scan the Custom-House, the rotting wharves, and the ramshackle tenements once occupied by ship-chandlers, sailmakers and riggers, he had inquired the way to the Marine Museum. Passing a graveyard where the gray stones leaned this way and that, he lingered to read the half-obliterated carvings and said to himself:

'The last one of them has been tucked underground, I suppose. I might have planned a more cheerful excursion, but I always wanted to see this queer old back-number of a town.'

The Marine Museum proved to be more diverting, but even in these halls, so eloquent of a finished chapter of American history, he failed to find what he sought and ventured to ask the old custodian:

'What has become of all the Penfold portraits and the rest of the family relics? These paintings are mostly copies, I notice. I have been told that the Penfolds were the great shipping merchants in the old days.'

'Miss Hester Penfold has many of the originals,' was the reply. 'She has raked the town for pictures, documents,

ship models, charts — whatever concerns the family history. It is understood that they will come to the Museum at her death, but meanwhile she cannot bear to give them up.'

The stranger was alertly interested. His brown face lighted with a boyish smile as he exclaimed:

'Miss Hester Penfold? So there is one of them still above ground, after all? Tell me where she lives, if you please, and I may try to scrape acquaintance.'

'She lives in very grand style and is known as a woman that is dreadfully set in her notions,' was the dubious information. 'But if you are a seafaring man, which I suspect, she may take a fancy to you and show you through the house. It's a sight worth seeing.'

Undaunted, the young man advanced up Sussex Street with a swinging, unhurried gait until he approached the Penfold mansion. Its size and dignity made him hesitate. However, he turned into the arched entrance of the lawn, rang the bell, and offered the maid a card that bore the name of Mr. Stephen Fleming.

The servant eyed him with approval, concluded that he was a gentleman, and forbore to ask him his business with the mistress of the mansion. Miss Penfold, therefore, had no clue to his identity and studied the card with so helpless an air that Angela volunteered:

'Why not let me go down and look him over? It may be a book-agent cleverly disguised.'

'That rattle-headed chit of an Ellen should have found out who he was. All she can say is that he is a fine young man with a bold eye and a "melojious voice." Of course I shall not permit you to go down alone.'

'Then I shall be right at your heels, Aunt Hester. Young men who fit that description do not call every day.'

It is worthy of note that Angela delayed to glance into a

mirror and otherwise betrayed an interest in her appearance that would have flattered the mysterious Stephen Fleming. As for Miss Penfold, she displayed a slight hauteur as she swept into the reception-room and confronted the stranger who stood where the maid had convoyed him to an anchorage. His ingenuous features disclosed so much open admiration of his hostess that she begged him to be seated and waited to hear that 'melojious voice.'

'I came to Stonehaven on a sort of sentimental pilgrimage, Miss Penfold,' said he. 'My excuse for troubling you may sound a little far-fetched, but before my people settled out in the Presque Isle colony of Michigan, 'way back in 1790 or so, they hailed from this port. I have run across their family name so often in reading about the old-time shipping of this country that I have always been curious to look them up.'

Miss Hester leaned forward in her chair with a pretty gesture of excited animation and asked:

'Were any of them Penfolds?'

The stranger hastened to protest:

'Oh, I did not come here to claim kinship as a long-lost cousin or something of the sort. My great-grandfather was a Penfold, I believe, and his daughter married a Fleming, but I have never tried to figure out the family tree. Life is too short. I am more interested in their splendid old ships.'

'You are more interested in their old ships?' breathlessly exclaimed Miss Penfold. She stared at this robust young man and her eyes sparkled as she went on to say, 'Can it be possible, Mr. Stephen Fleming, that you are a seafarer yourself?'

'I have just left my ship in New York — four months out from Nagasaki,' said he; 'the American skysail-yarder Ticonderoga, about the last of the deep-water fleet, and a

wretched old hooker to be in, with a skipper that ought to be hung in a bight of his own halliards. I signed as chief officer and one voyage was plenty. The romance of the sea in these days has been pretty well hammered out of me.'

'Will you be good enough to step into my library?' replied Miss Penfold. 'I shall be glad to show you some old pictures.'

Hastening ahead of him, she surprised Angela, who was ambushed under cover of a portière. Whisking her niece into the hall, Miss Penfold whispered eagerly:

'It sounds much too good to be true, my dear. I shall refuse to let you meet him until I have looked him up in the family genealogy, but I feel positive that he is what he claims to be. He has the Penfold chin and, oh, Angela, he is a sailor and your fourth cousin.'

'But how in the world did you ever lose track of him, Aunt Hester?'

'I was aware that one branch of the family went West long ago, but they seemed to have vanished completely, and, as you know, I have cared to trace only the lines that were connected with Stonehaven shipping. At this rate, all of my dreams will come true.'

Angela hovered within earshot while Miss Hester returned to the waiting sailor, who was gazing at a row of Penfold portraits. His arms folded across the chest, the close-cropped head held erect, the athletic body poised with the grace of long training on heaving decks, Stephen Fleming resembled the kind of man that had once dwelt in this house. His aspect wonderfully kindled Miss Penfold's imagination. She was only too ready to take him for granted. Fearing to hurt him by the appearance of suspicion, she explained as she opened a formidable-looking volume on the desk:

'I must first show you how we are related. — Ah, here

it is. The Michigan branch begins with your grandmother, who married Stephen Fleming, and she was a sister of my own grandfather, Captain John Penfold. It is precisely as I conjectured. Then you must be my —'

'It is not near enough to make you feel under the slightest obligation,' said the sailor. 'I am just drifting in for the day and out again, and really I don't belong among people of your position in the world.'

'But I do not want you to go away so soon' — and she pouted like a child about to be deprived of a fascinating plaything. 'A seaman in the family is such a momentous discovery that we must become much better acquainted. And I have logs and letters to show you, many of them written by your great-grandfather.'

'I am very sorry,' he replied, 'but I must be in New York to-morrow to look for another ship, although a mate's berth in a square-rigger is hard to find, and I expect to fetch up in a steamer, at the bottom of the ladder again. I was foolish to go to sea, but that can't be helped.'

'It was the Penfold blood!' cried Miss Hester. 'You will make me ashamed for my hospitality if you refuse to dine with us to-night.'

'I promised to meet an old shipmate in Boston, Miss Penfold — thank you with all my heart. He is master of a fruit steamer and we haven't crossed each other's hawse in years. I should like to look around a bit longer, if you don't mind, at the ship pictures and so on.'

Just then Angela Breck threw obedience to the winds and entered the library. If the sailor kinsman had been moved to admiration at sight of the aunt, he was fairly taken aback by the niece, who shot the most demure glance in his direction and hurried over to Miss Penfold with the specious query:

'Do you mind if I go downtown? And shall I take those

books to the Institute for you? They are due this afternoon.'

There was nothing to do but present this dangerous young man to his fourth cousin. Stephen Fleming bowed in no clumsy fashion, murmured his pleasure, and was humbled by a salutation of studied indifference. Immediately thereafter Angela vanished with her chin uptilted, as if the princess of the enchanted castle had deigned to give audience to an unbidden serf. Unversed in feminine psychology and assuming that his intrusion had offended the radiant young person, he sighed, looked downcast, and picked up his hat, at which Miss Penfold, in genuine distress, besought him:

'I am greatly disappointed that you cannot stay for dinner, but please do not leave until I ask your advice about a certain matter. Your arrival seems actually providential. You are the one man in the world to help me.'

He listened with respectful, sympathetic attention while the lady of one idea unfolded her plan of a Penfold voyage. In her romantic heart she knew that he had been sent to aid her and to command the ship of her fancy. He was a Penfold and a sailor, young, masterful, and what was more wonderful, schooled in Yankee, square-rigged vessels. His hard-headed common sense balked at first, but he made no comment. Gradually, however, Miss Hester wove her peculiar spell about him and like Angela Breck he began to believe that she had a right to do whatever she pleased in her own way. At length she came to her tragical peroration, and she was on the verge of tears.

'I have seen the Nautilus and the ship has been thoroughly inspected. She can be rebuilt and made safe and sound. This may seem surprising, but there is the old coasting schooner Peggy which comes to Stonehaven now

and then. She was a privateer in the War of 1812 and the town in which she was built celebrated her hundredth birthday not long ago. I wished to consult with Captain Claghorn and Captain Burdick, but those absurd old gentlemen are still quarreling over the question of which is to take charge. They refuse to come and see me for fear they may meet.'

'If I can be of service to you, my business in New York will have to wait,' Stephen Fleming assured her. 'This scheme of yours is so — er — so original that I should want time to think it over before passing judgment.'

'Then if you can come back to-morrow, it will be doing me the greatest favor.'

Miss Hester was a gentle tyrant and the sailor felt that he was under orders. He promised to report as requested, and went to Boston to find his friend. They talked late that night in the cozy cabin of the fruit steamer.

'A man who follows the sea,' said Stephen Fleming, 'is prepared for the unexpected, Charlie, but I am on my beam ends for once. When we were foremast hands together, the old shellbacks used to pass the time in the dog watch by talking about what they would do with a buried treasure. Being short of imagination, they seldom got further than unlimited rum and tobacco and pretty girls to wait on them. In this instance, I walked straight into the Arabian Nights. A ship's mate without a berth, fresh from that hell-begotten packet of a Ticonderoga, and this grand lady in her palace of a house chooses me as her confidential adviser.'

'Well, you do make a good impression,' returned the master of the freighter. 'You come from decent people. Why the deuce should you expect your own relatives to set the dog on you? I'm thankful you are clear of that old tarrier, Captain Reuben Doane of the Ticonderoga. You

deserve better luck. Here's hoping you land on your feet this time.'

'But what do you think of this notion of hers, Charlie, to duplicate an old-fashioned trading voyage out East? She seems to be dead set on it.'

'Whimsical, I should call it, old man, but what's the odds? It is nobody's business but her own. She isn't likely to drown herself if she carries you along. I never chummed with millionaires myself, but from what I read in the papers some of them do things a good deal sillier than this. You are the man she needs for the job. Go to it. Did I hear you mention a girl?'

'You did,' confessed Stephen. 'I thought she was stunning, but she didn't seem to like my looks. Honestly, she took my measure as if she suspected me of trying to steal the silver.'

'You can't always tell by the way they act,' commented the other, who was both a married man and a philosopher. 'Sometimes they carry a lee helm by way of being contrary a-purpose. If you like, I'll go aboard the Nautilus with you in the morning, before you go back to Stonehaven. They built honest vessels in those days.'

Miss Penfold was impatiently awaiting Stephen Fleming in the port of vanished fleets. She was troubled by no misgivings and had roundly rebuked Ogden Haight for scoffing at her account of the episode of the providential kinsman. What perturbed poor Haight was the fear that Angela might share this romantic interest, but she was wholly noncommittal. Under protest, he obtained a card at the club for the interloper and half-heartedly promised to befriend him, calling frequently at the Penfold mansion on one pretext or another until the former mate of the Ticonderoga reappeared.

The two men greeted each other with a scrutiny mutually

appraising. The cultivated, languid repose of Ogden Haight's manner stiffened in a kind of challenging hostility. Elemental emotions made his pulse beat faster. The carpet knight was in a mood to fight for a lady's favor. Angela perceived that he was unhappy and, wickedly enjoying his plight, she exclaimed:

'I am so glad to have you meet my cousin, Stephen Fleming. I am sure you will like each other. He is a genuine god from the machine who has made Aunt Hester's voyage come true.'

Haight was too tactful to declare open war and she chatted with Stephen at some length, the sailor maintaining a cordial composure and candidly answering certain pointed questions concerning his home and occupation. Miss Penfold put an end to an awkward situation by summoning Fleming into the library and announcing that she wished to discuss the terms of a business arrangement.

'First, I must beg of you not to mind Ogden Haight,' said she. 'He is a spoiled child and we all humor him and make allowances. He was vexed just now because we have seen fit to fly in the face of his opinions.'

Fleming nodded, but courteously reserved comment.

'Before we go any further, Miss Penfold,' he told her, 'I wish you to look over my papers. Then, if you like, you can write out to my home town, and also to the owners who have employed me.'

He exhibited his certificates as mate and qualified master, besides an earlier bundle of discharges as an able seaman in which his services and character were rated as excellent.

'In my eyes you could have no finer credentials,' said Miss Penfold, 'but if it will make you feel easier I will communicate with your former employers. I am surprised that you do not demand credentials from me, as a sane, responsible person.'

'I was once as fond of the sea as you are, and I can learn to love it again if I sail under your house-flag,' was his gallant rejoinder.

'Under the Penfold house-flag, Stephen Fleming. You do please me in every word you say.'

'I gather that you wish to have me sign articles of some kind, to help you in this Nautilus enterprise. Is that correct?'

'Yes, you are to command her. Meanwhile I wish to get estimates of the cost of making the ship ready for sea in every respect. You are to superintend the work in the owner's interest. I will attend to the cargo at the proper time. Then you will select a crew — no Norwegians, no Englishmen, mind you, but true-blue Yankee seamen.'

'I don't know where to find them unless there are specimens in your Marine Museum.'

'I shall depend upon you, Captain Stephen Fleming. Captains Andrew Claghorn and Chester Burdick will have to go along as skippers *emeriti* or honorary gunners or something of the sort. I shall begin to pay you the salary of a first-class shipmaster at once.'

'I accept the berth, thank you, Miss Penfold,' said he. 'There are no more shipyards in Stonehaven, so I had better make my headquarters in Boston and be handy to my ship. I shall move my traps aboard as soon as possible.'

'Precisely the proper spirit, Captain Fleming. You must report to me frequently, and I shall be at the shipyard and getting in your way a good deal of the time.'

The young shipmaster took his appointment so seriously that he could not be persuaded to tarry in Stonehaven beyond the next day. At the club he met an affable group who were immensely diverted by his plans and charmed with his personality. After he had bidden them good-

night, portly Billy Truelove spoke from the depths of his leather chair.

'You are looking a trifle bilious, Ogden, old top. And while I am near-sighted without my glasses, it struck me that you were none too agreeable in your bearing toward the young man. Bully good fellow, I should call him. The real thing! He has done things. Stonehaven ought to be proud of him. Quite the gentleman sailor.'

'He may be all right, but, see here, Billy,' was the glum response, 'how do I know that he didn't get wind of this daffy scheme of those two infatuated women and shove himself in with the idea of making some money out of them? Why, hang it, Miss Hester Penfold is giving him the run of her bank-account. He can go as far as he likes. It looks damnably queer to me. Of course I can't interfere too far —'

'Not without queering your own game,' dryly commented Truelove. 'You are between the devil and the deep sea, my boy. Given a girl who has been brought up to regard a deep-water sailor as the finest man in the world, and who seems to be booked to go to sea with an uncommonly attractive specimen of the same — a voyage conjured from the realms of pure romance, and —'

'Better look pleasant and quit fussing about it, Ogden,' suggested another voice. 'Get yourself invited as a passenger. That is the only card to play.'

'I refuse to have such matters discussed by a couple of blackguards in a club,' snorted the victim as he clapped on his hat and stalked away. 'It's bad form, and you know it.'

'Poor old chap. We were only teasing him,' murmured Truelove. 'His nose is certainly out of joint.'

'He does think a lot of the girl, Billy. I hope he keeps his head and does nothing silly. This Stephen Fleming is

capable of minding his own business. Did you notice the shoulders on him?'

The sailor was by no means a prey to the gloomy misgivings that tormented the sensitive soul of Ogden Haight. The task in hand was to transform the Nautilus with all possible dispatch and he forsook Stonehaven after a final conference with his employer. Angela Breck was an interested listener, but made few comments and the seafarer departed with never a notion in his honest head that she regarded him as anything more than a hired shipmaster.

A month passed and Fleming quitted the gaunt, stripped hull of the Nautilus only long enough to hurry to Stonehaven for an occasional hour or two of an evening. An army of ship carpenters and smiths swarmed among the timbers of the forlorn remnant of a vessel, ripping off rotten planking, hewing away spongy beams, and the clatter and clang of their industry was music in the ears of Miss Hester Penfold. She visited the shipyard at least once a week and was fond of repeating to Fleming in her most confident manner:

'My father owned the Cape Horn clipper John Penfold. She was built and launched and ready for sea ninety days after the keel was laid in this same yard. There is a record for you to live up to. I do not expect to have to wait for the Nautilus all summer long.'

Whenever Angela came to see the ship, Ogden Haight joined the party and discussed the technical details of rigging and outfitting with an enthusiasm obviously forced. He had no intention of being left behind on sailing day. Little by little Stephen Fleming had come to know Angela, and their footing was one of comradeship welded by a mutual interest in the Penfold 'adventure.' She comprehended that he was to be trusted and that his integrity was solidly ballasted. His devotion to Miss Penfold's welfare was

absolute and he was as vigilant to prevent wasteful outlay as if the money were his own, while only the best of material and workmanship passed his inspection.

It was on a Sunday afternoon when Stephen Fleming first learned that Angela regarded him as a friend to be consulted in time of need. He had come to Stonehaven to see Miss Hester, but that woman of many affairs had been called away by one of her numerous philanthropies, and with some trepidation he asked Angela if she would like to walk as far as Penfold Wharf. To his surprise she replied:

'I am so glad you thought of it. There is something on my mind that I simply must talk to you about. And people are always dropping into the house on Sunday. Let's go right away.'

Fleming asked no questions nor did she vouchsafe explanation until they had reached the harbor and the melancholy old wharf stretching a long arm toward the sea. The east wind was blowing briskly. It sang through the timbered lofts and shattered windows of the ancient warehouse with gusty stridulation, like the sound of the wind in a ship's shrouds and stays. The damp, salt tang of it drove an unwonted paleness from Angela's cheek and restored the vivid roses as she sought a bench in the lee of a tottering building and made room for her companion.

It was almost as though they were at sea together, what with the wind and the wash of the waves against the bulkhead, the smell of tar, and the gulls crying overhead. The thought thrilled him. His face was eloquent as he looked at her. For some time she was silent, gazing out at the surf on the bar and the unbroken ocean beyond. Seated thus, her chin resting in her palm, she began to speak in a low voice.

'You may have heard me mention my brother Arthur. He is younger than I — in his last year at a preparatory

school. He has caused me a great deal of anxiety, for he is headstrong and extravagant and has some very foolish ideas. We have had no mother and father, you see, since we were wee tots. My aunt is very decided in her likes and dislikes and she has taken a strong prejudice against Arthur. He did get himself into some annoying scrapes here in Stonehaven and she took them too seriously. While she is providing for him and expects to send him through college, yet I think it is more because she loves me than because she is fond of him. I received a letter from him yesterday, but I dare not show it to her.'

Angela displayed the disturbing document and walked slowly toward the end of the wharf while Fleming scanned the hastily scrawled pages which were dated from New York.

Dear Sis:

This is good-bye for a while. I couldn't stay in school any longer. The head master suspended me for a month. It was nothing very wicked, a poker game in my room after hours, and a tutor butted in and accidentally fell downstairs, and it was some little row. It was only penny-ante at that, but the head master is a most unreasonable guy. I intended to go home and turn over a new leaf and then beat it back to school when my sentence ran out, but all of a sudden I made up my mind to chuck it up and run away to sea. Don't blame me. It runs in the family, so you are always telling me.

It was this way. I happened to meet a fellow here in New York, a rough diamond who showed me the Bowery and spent his own money to give me a good time. He steered me to the right kind of a ship, just as a friendly favor, for he knows the ropes, and I am off for Calcutta in the big four-masted sailing ship Ticonderoga, Captain Reuben Doane. I am in a sailor's boarding-house, waiting for the crew to be mustered. It is a tough joint, but no end of fun if you are looking for experiences. We expect to go aboard the old packet in a day or two. Now there's no use in looking for me or blubbering about it, Angela. If Aunt Hester kicks up a shindy —

Stephen Fleming did not finish reading the defiant, youthful farewell and its affectionate postscript. His face had become set and lowering and the girl was startled by an angry ejaculation. Before he could speak she returned to his side and asked appealingly:

'Does it seem so dreadful as all that? And is it too late to find him and take him back to school? Aunt Hester will fail to see any romance whatever in this escapade of Arthur's. A ship's forecastle is no place for him, from what I have heard you say. He is big and tall for his age, but such a boy! And — and I can't bear to think of it.'

She tried to smile, but the brave voice quivered and the frank, undaunted eyes were wet. Stephen Fleming knew not how to fence with the ugly truth and he blurted in a rush of vehement words:

'Going to sea might knock some of the nonsense out of him, but he must not go in the Ticonderoga. No decent foremast hand signs with Captain Reuben Doane. The ship is infamous from Hongkong to Sandy Hook and back again. What was I doing in her? It was for only one voyage, Miss Breck, and I couldn't find another berth, and I was ambitious to get ahead in my profession. I fancied that no skipper could get the upper hand of me, and there was a foolish pride in tackling the toughest proposition I could find. So the ship is going out East again! She ought to be cut down to a barge or broken up.'

Fleming paced to and fro, his hands clasped behind him, while Angela stared in silent dismay. Black as was the picture his words had painted, she felt an implicit reliance in his courage and resourcefulness and picked up spirit to say:

'I know you will tell me how to find Arthur and save him from that awful ship if it is not too late. It must seem inconsistent to you that I should oppose his going to sea, but

I know something about conditions, and the kind of men that fill the forecastles, and —'

'Our kind of sailoring in the Nautilus is different,' he agreed. 'It belongs with the great days that are no more. But this is wasting time. I can catch a train that will make a Boston connection to land me in New York by midnight. According to your brother's letter, the Ticonderoga will not sail before to-morrow at the earliest. I'll promise to bring the runaway back.'

'But how will you know how to look for him, Mr. Fleming? Will you try to find him to-night?'

'I can almost locate him from his letter. The smooth rascal who took him in tow was a boarding-house runner raking the Bowery for any sort of greenhorn he could pick up. He will turn this deluded young brother of yours over to a shipping master and share the blood money, for Captain Reuben Doane has to pay high to get a crew together. Oh, I know where to look. When I was a youngster the sailors' boarding-houses robbed me and bundled me to sea too often for me to forget them.'

'I am so happy,' smiled Angela. 'I do hate to deceive Aunt Hester or keep things from her, but Arthur does get on her nerves. She is not so strong as she looks and I was quite worried about her health until she became wrapped up heart and soul in this dream-voyage of ours. It has made her young again, thanks to you, Captain Stephen.'

The sailor blushed, for this gratitude oddly disturbed him. The princess had stepped from her throne to recognize his humble merits. He exclaimed with more feeling than the occasion might seem to demand:

'Nothing could please me more than this chance to do you a service. I give you my word that your brother stays ashore, and here is my hand on it.'

She let him clasp her fingers in his hard palm, where he

held them for a lingering moment. It was a natural thing to do, this friendly handclasp as a pledge and a token. It so chanced, however, that a very handsome automobile was passing along Penfold Street which turned at a sharp angle hard by the shoreward end of the wharf. The man at the wheel was compelled to slacken speed and the fates so ordered it that he should glance idly over his shoulder at the picturesque vista of shabby warehouses and dancing water.

Perceiving the man and the maid and instantly misjudging appearances, he started as if he had touched a live wire, glared most ferociously through his goggles and ripped out an earnest oath. The car wobbled from its course, shaved the curb, just missed exterminating a smudgy infant, and continued on its way while Ogden Haight chewed the cud of bitterness and planned desperate deeds.

Unwitting that they had caused such sudden sorrow, Angela and Stephen walked toward Sussex Street, parting near the railroad station. He turned once and she waved her hand. He flourished his hat with a touch of boyish elation.

'She will tell Miss Penfold that I was called to Boston on business,' he said to himself. 'With good luck I shall be away from the Nautilus no more than a day.'

While waiting for the train, he was diverted by the sight of Ogden Haight, who leaped from his automobile, ran across the platform, and greeted his friend Billy Truelove.

'Hope I haven't kept you waiting. Hop in, and we'll whirl out to join the crowd. A great little party.'

Just then Haight spied Fleming and the very recent provocation wrecked his temper. Ablaze with anger, losing his head, he rushed forward and unsteadily exclaimed:

'This bunco game of yours has lasted about long enough, do you understand? I won't stand for it! I know all about

you. You are the cheapest kind of an adventurer. It's time your bluff was called.'

Without a word the sailor grasped the irate young man by the arm and hustled him along the platform, away from the crowd. In their wake lumbered Billy Truelove, expecting to call an ambulance to remove what might be left of his rash comrade. Clamping his strong hands upon Haight's shoulders, Fleming replied, more amazed than wrathful:

'We'll have no public scandal, so don't wriggle and twist and swear. Here comes my train. You know where to find me, Haight. If you have anything to say, and it will make you feel easier to say it, come to the shipyard.'

Fleming released the captive and the train bore him away from his singular encounter. He had been accustomed to regard a clash between grown men as rather serious business, but this affair seemed inexplicably childish. Possibly Haight had been drinking.

'Something must have happened to make him so rash and reckless as all that,' thought the mariner. 'There are two things that afflict a man with those symptoms — rum and jealousy. He ought to know better! I wonder what it was that touched him off.'

CHAPTER III

THE MAN IN THE CAB

Shortly after midnight Stephen Fleming was hurrying through a maze of crooked streets and alleys in the ancient quarter of Manhattan that lies nearest the region of ships and the haunts of sailor-men. Soon rain began to fall in a windless, drenching downpour. Hemmed in by tall warehouses, the wayfarer vainly sought a street-car. He had brought no other clothes than those in which he stood and was disinclined to be water-soaked in this awkward fashion, so he sought hasty refuge beneath the awning of a corner saloon. The weather showed no signs of clearing. Fleming was about to resume his pilgrimage when he noticed a cab standing by the side-entrance. The driver, who was enveloped in a rubber cape, sat stolid as a dripping monument, his head tilted far forward as if he were asleep.

The cab appeared to be empty. It was a case of any port in a storm and Fleming splashed along the pavement, wrenched open the door of the cab, dived inside to escape the rain, and poked out his head to shout a destination. Without a word of parley, the cabman roused himself, muttered fretfully, 'You was a domned long while comin' out agin,' and whipped up his steed.

No sooner had the sailor settled comfortably against the cushions than, to his immense amazement, he collided with another passenger who was slumped in the farther corner. His condition was limp and weary. The detailed aspect of this unexpected stranger was obscured by darkness, but his bulk seemed to be considerable. The rattling motion of the cab somewhat enlivened him, and before Stephen Fleming could stammer an apology, the other man

hauled himself to a sitting posture, flung a long, muscular arm around the neck of his unwilling companion, and said in a thick, rasping voice:

'Thought I'd lost you, Mr. Pratt. Guess I'm pretty drunk. Cabby's drunk. All hands lit up. Glad of it — most unusual for me — but why not, hey? Plenty o' reason. Oh, I won't blab. Going to sea and lose my ship this voyage — mebbe lose my life, gray hairs and all. All fixed up between us, Mr. Pratt. Never lost a ship on purpose before. You can trust me to do the trick and keep my mouth shut, Mr. Pratt. You're my boss. I've got to obey orders. Insured all right? You bet she is. Did you fill my flask? Where in hell is it? I'm dry as ten million little fishes.'

Fleming smothered a cry of consternation. He could have sworn to this voice, disguised though it was by maudlin accents. His heart was thumping as he shrank into his corner and was able to discern the flowing white beard that detached itself from the gloom with a kind of nebulous effect. His knowledge of the ways of the sea had instantly revealed that Captain Reuben Doane of the Ticonderoga was planning a deed dastardly beyond words, to cast his vessel away for a price. The sailor was dumb, hoping to flee this perilous intimacy before his identity should be discovered. The vital business in hand was to rescue young Arthur Breck from the brave old square-rigger that was consigned to so shameful a destiny. Again the drunken voice spluttered in his ear:

'Fetch out the flask, Mr. Pratt. What's the matter with you? Sorry I'm half-seas over. Annoys you, does it? Never happen again, so help me. Bound out in the morning. Poor old Reuben Doane.'

The cab jolted past a brilliant arc light and a radiant shaft shot through the uncurtained window and fell athwart the faces of the evil old captain and his former

mate. Reuben Doane stared with hanging, tremulous lip, and the vinous flush of his wrinkled cheek shifted to a dirty, livid white. Thus might he have appeared if overtaken by a stroke. Tense and wrathful, Stephen Fleming faced him without flinching. For a long moment there was silence and immobility. Then with a growling, blasphemous imprecation, Captain Doane lunged forward and seized the other man by the throat. Dashing a fist into the bearded face, Fleming wrenched himself free, tore open the door, bounded to the pavement, and ran as though the devil were at his heels.

Nor was the infuriated patriarch much less agile in pursuit. Tumbling headlong from the cab he bawled: 'You —— —— dog! It's you, is it?' And with wonderful speed for a drunken man he pounded along the dim alley into which Stephen Fleming had fled. The chase was brief, for Captain Doane's will was stronger than his legs, and he tripped and fell at the first turning where he was heard roaring for help. The fugitive soon slackened his pace, oblivious of the rain, and set out to find the sailors' boarding-house of one 'Peg' Moran toward which the cab had been heading.

So the Ticonderoga was to go forth on her last voyage! Other worn-out ships which could no longer earn profits had been scuttled or beached to cheat the underwriters, but surely no rascally skipper had ever been trapped in so incredible an episode as this. The adventure with Ogden Haight at the Stonehaven railroad station had been no more than playing at high tragedy, of a piece with the scheme of an unreal, delightful existence bounded by the Penfold mansion and the shipyard. Ogden Haight, as an enemy, would never make a strong man lie awake nights, but to have surprised the criminal secret of Captain Reuben Doane was quite a different matter.

'Perhaps the hoary scoundrel will be afraid to lose his ship, now that he knows that I know,' reflected Fleming, 'but the odds are against her ever seeing port again. And precious little will he care whether his men sink or swim as long as he saves his own skin. I must get Angela Breck's brother out of her.'

Steering a course into Water Street, he came to 'Peg' Moran's dingy hostelry where deep-water sailors were plundered of their wages and packed off to sea again. The hour was late, but lights shone through the lower windows and a clamor of hoarse talk and laughter could be heard in the street. Fleming pushed open the door and strode into the shadowy hall, which reeked of bad tobacco and worse rum. He knew the place of old and shuddered at recollection of what he had seen and heard in this house of many sorrows when he was a greenhorn before the mast. From the room where the noisy company was gathered rose a shrill, whining voice of one who harangued the others.

'I swore it was me last bleedin' voyage. A tidy job ashore was my lay, old pal. And here I am, starved out, by Gawd, and shippin' with a rotten, man-killin' bully. I'll cut his black heart out if he tries any tricks on me. Here's to Cap'n Reuben Doane and his blighted Ticonderoga! May he roast on a red-hot gridiron for a thousand years. Drink her down, boys. No heel-taps.'

'That sounds as if I had come to the right place,' thought Fleming, recalling the bloodthirsty speaker as the most sodden, timorous member of the last crew. He shoved into the room and looked about for 'Peg' Moran. The pot-valiant orator turned pale and gasped like a fish. Clattering to his feet with a cringing bow, he quavered:

'How is your good health, Mister Fleming? I was crackin' on a bit, all in fun, you understand. No harm intended. Tryin' to throw a scare into these new hands.

Boys, this is the mate, the finest gentleman that ever walked the quarterdeck.'

'Don't lose your nerve, Williams,' said Fleming, with a chuckle. 'I am not going in the Ticonderoga. Curse the skipper as much as you like and I promise not to peach.'

A lanky, lantern-jawed man with a wisp of a gray goatee loomed from the blue fog of smoke and exclaimed heartily:

'Glad to see you, Mister Fleming. If you're looking for sailors, I can't give you another man. I had to rake the town clean to round up this festive bunch of buckoes, and I hand 'em over to the shipping master in the morning.'

Fleming nodded curtly to 'Peg' Moran, but his eyes were roving in search of a youth who might resemble the mental picture of Arthur Breck. He was not in this group of broken, dissolute men, and Fleming asked the boarding-master:

'Are there any more Ticonderoga hands in the house? I am looking for a lad, a friend of mine. I am very anxious to see him before he sails.'

'And what might you want of him, Mister Fleming?' queried Moran, whose tones were less friendly. 'If you are in some other ship and aim to cop one of me guests to fill out a crew of your own, you've tacked up against the wrong proposition. You're a smart one, all right.'

Stephen Fleming's stubborn jaw was pushed the least bit forward, for he was unskilled at subterfuge, and his voice was heavier than before as he went on to say:

'I don't want any sailors, but I do want this boy. I feel pretty sure that you have him stowed away upstairs, "Peg." Your runner, Dick Mott, picked him up on the Bowery or thereabouts and bamboozled him into going to sea. The lad is no sailor, you're aware of that. And he is still in his teens. He ran away from school.'

The bony, leathery countenance of 'Peg' Moran, was bisected by a grin as he rejoined, with a nasty laugh:

'Nothin' doin'. Of the two of us, you're the kidnaper. Short of hands, are ye? Well, you're barkin' up the wrong tree. I'm no cradle-robber. There's Dick Mott now. Ask him.'

Fleming followed the boarding-master into the hall. A flashy young man was engaged in vociferous argument with a Norwegian seaman who aired some kind of grievance about his baggage. Paying no heed to them, Fleming brushed past and was about to spring upstairs to make a search when 'Peg' Moran rushed to blockade the passage.

'You're not aboard your ship,' he snarled. 'Don't get gay, Mister Mate. Come away from them stairs. I'll talk peaceable to you, but no monkey business goes.'

The seamen in the adjoining room forsook their bottles and came tumbling out to enjoy the row. It was a rare treat to see a ship's officer bearded in this lively fashion. Convinced that Arthur Breck was asleep on an upper floor and that 'Peg' Moran had no intention of surrendering him, Stephen Fleming tarried not to seek reënforcements. He was not in the habit of reckoning the odds when it came to fighting his way through a mob of foremast hands. Without waste motion, his fist shot out and smote the boarding-master between the eyes. Moran sprawled backward and lay doubled up on the lower stairs. As he went down he yelled:

'Give it to him, Dick. Soak him good and plenty.'

Fleming stooped to toss the boarding-master out of his path while the seamen drew back in a huddled group. Just then Dick Mott whipped out a slim, black object attached to a thong and brought it down upon Fleming's head with vicious impact. It was a murderous blow and the victim staggered and fell forward across 'Peg' Moran with

a deep groan. Half-stunned as he was, Fleming tried to regain his footing, but his legs crumpled under him and he could see nothing but crimson flashes of fire. As if the voice were a long way off he heard Moran say:

'Neatly done, Dick — a leetle mite strong, though. I guess you cut him pretty bad. Wouldn't it be a fine joke to ship him aboard the Ticonderoga as an able seaman — what? Blast him, he near knocked the block off me.'

Several of the bystanders guffawed. The jest was much to their liking, but Williams yelled with more courage than was to be expected of this rat of a man:

'He's a white man down to his bloomin' heels, is Mister Fleming. I won't stand for this. I goes after the police.'

Dick Mott ran at him, but he nimbly ducked and shot away for the front door. A burly German tripped him, however, and held him squirming while 'Peg' Moran bellowed:

'Here, no more of this rough stuff. I'm done with this pesterin' mate that you seem so fond of. Help me chuck him out on the sidewalk.'

Fleming's hard head had not been broken and his vitality was tremendous. Already his wits were beginning to clear. Still lying where he had fallen, he managed to raise a hand and wipe the blood from his eyes. Shame and disgust awoke in his dazed consciousness. His will struggled to make his muscles do his bidding. His brain was spinning and his head ached intolerably, for the slungshot had been handled without mercy.

Before 'Peg' Moran and the runner could lay hands on him, he heaved himself to his feet, swaying this way and that, and tugged at the broken stair-rail. It was flimsily fastened and came away in his grasp. The fragment of hardwood was a yard long and with this stout weapon he lurched toward the street door, fairly flailing the men out

of his path. It was like the charge of a wounded buffalo and none tried to stop him. Half-falling down the stone steps outside, he pursued a faltering, uncertain course along the pavement, wandering into the nearest by-way, until the flurry of strength forsook him and he collapsed forlornly.

A policeman found him sitting in an entry with his head in his hands and roughly prodded him.

'Wan more drunken sailor. Here, get a move on ye. Where's your ship? Are ye waitin' for me to run you in?'

'Steer me to a hospital, if you please,' muttered Fleming. 'I shall have to get patched up.'

He endeavored to explain his plight and to beg the officer to search 'Peg' Moran's place and find Arthur Breck, but a spell of giddiness overtook him and the words died in a drowsy, incoherent murmur. The policeman stood him upon his feet, pulled and hauled him to the nearest street light and saw that he had been hurt.

'It beats the Dutch how these sailors love to fight,' said the worthy man. 'Somebody must ha' throwed a piano at this wan.'

With that he propped Fleming against a grated store window and turned in a telephone call. When the luckless knight-errant came to himself, daylight shone brightly and a nurse in a white uniform was eyeing him with evident interest. He promptly kicked the bedclothes into fearful disorder and impatiently demanded:

'What time of day is it, if you please?'

'Almost eight o'clock, and you have been sleeping beautifully,' said the nurse. 'Would you like some broth?'

'Ham and eggs sounds better, thank you, but I am too busy to eat,' he cried, sitting up in bed. 'Is my figure-head damaged very much? It seems to be bandaged all around the compass.'

'It was a scalp-wound, ever so many stitches, but it will

mend very nicely if you will only stop thrashing about,' was her severe retort.

'I can't help that. My brain seems to have joggled back into its proper place and I want my clothes. This is delaying the game.'

'You want your clothes? What an impossible patient you are!'

'I must have my clothes' — and he waved a commanding arm at her. 'I am able to navigate and if you don't let me out I shall pull this hospital down.'

The nurse vanished to summon the doctor and Fleming returned to his pillow and stared moodily at the ceiling. What a failure he had made of his high-hearted mission! He might yet redeem himself if he could find the crew of the Ticonderoga before 'Peg' Moran carried his recruits on board. They must first be herded before the Shipping Commissioner and perhaps he might intercept them there. Stephen Fleming cursed his luck and hated himself with a novel humility. His pride was laid low.

'After this performance Ogden Haight could slap my face with impunity. Stretched out by "Peg" Moran and his runner,' he groaned aloud. 'And was once man enough to hold the mate's berth in the Ticonderoga.'

The nurse flitted in to announce with a twinkle: 'The doctor is busy at present. Your clothes were taken away to be dried, so you may fuss as much as you like.'

'Then I shall break out of here in a blanket,' declared the unruly patient. 'This happens to be a matter of life and death. My head has been cracked before now. That's a mere trifle. I was merely knocked silly for a little while last night. I can't stay here. I don't want to be impolite, but will you please try to understand and help me.'

'If you will tell me why. I am dying to know. You are no common sailor.'

'I am a shipmaster — the Nautilus, East-Indiaman,' he rapped out. 'My dear girl, if you have a brother or a home or any sympathy for suffering humanity in your heart, you will get me out of this hospital.'

'How thrilling!' she cried. 'Do tell me more about it. I love sea stories, and I never nursed a real sea captain before. I didn't imagine that any of them were as young as you.'

Poor Stephen Fleming wrung his hands and failed to notice her admiring gaze. His distress was so real that she sighed and pensively observed:

'I really don't want to see you transferred to the violent ward and yet I hate to lose you. I think you might tell me about some of your shipwrecks, but I suppose I had better try to find the doctor again.'

This time the susceptible young nurse was more successful and the white-jacketed house-surgeon faced a raging patient who was deaf to all argument.

'Oh, give him his clothes and turn him loose,' was the brief command. 'He will have to take the consequences. It will do him no good to stay here.'

A few minutes later Fleming walked into the street, weak as if from a spell of illness, but with his purpose unshaken. Passers-by turned to stare at his bandaged head, for he wore no hat. Plodding resolutely into Water Street he made for 'Peg' Moran's cyclonic boarding-house.

On the way thither he spied Dick Mott, who took to his heels, but was halted by a shout of: 'Avast, there! I'm not after you. I'll pay money for information.'

The runner returned warily and his manner was contrite after his own hangdog fashion as he sung out:

'I didn't mean to hit you so hard, Mister Fleming. I swear to God I didn't. It was the old man's orders and I had to hand you one.'

'Never mind about me, Dick. Here's a five-dollar note if you will tell me the honest truth for once. Where is that school boy you picked up for the Ticonderoga?'

The boarding-master's jackal rubbed his head and answered sheepishly:

'On the level, I'm sort of sorry I done it. He was the softest mark I ever landed. If you had come to me first and slipped me the word instead of rampagin' with the old man, I'd ha' put you wise. I guess the lad is aboard the vessel by now. They made an early start, for Cap'n Reuben Doane sent word he was anxious to get to sea while the wind was fair.'

'I know why he was in a hurry to sail,' said Fleming with vivid recollection of his midnight meeting with the master of the Ticonderoga. 'Where is the ship? In the stream?'

'Abreast of the Statue o' Liberty. She was towed out from dock yesterday, Mister Fleming. But if that fool kid of yours has signed articles and is aboard ship, you'll never get him off. I guess you know Reuben Doane.'

Stephen Fleming nodded without speaking and offered money to the runner.

Dick Mott, young ruffian that he was, had a remnant of soul, and he blurted huskily: 'Stow the coin. Forget it. I can't take it. It's square of you not to call a cop. And I'm sore at myself about that kid.'

As Fleming moved with stumbling haste toward the water-front, he was conscious of a certain serene exaltation of spirit. There was no inward struggle, no indecision. His duty appeared to him as singularly clear and inevitable. He had pledged his honor to Angela Breck that her brother should not sail in the Ticonderoga. From this there was no appeal.

A Battery boatman ferried him out to the ship. She

swung to a shortened cable and a tug hovered within sailing distance. The stately square-rigger swam as a rare and beautiful picture in the grubby age of steam and Fleming was moved to recall the vanished fleets of Stonehaven. A wistful sadness shadowed his bold features.

Conspicuous upon the quarterdeck was the figure of Captain Reuben Doane, white of hair and ample beard, yet erect and vigorous. At a distance he seemed to possess a venerable dignity. Unobserved by this old man of the sea, Fleming gained the waist of the ship and gazed along the tumultuous, disordered deck. The mates were storming, with active fists and boots, among the fuddled wrecks of humanity miscalled able seamen. The boarding-masters had not yet gone overside, and anxious to get the vessel to sea without delay, they, too, charged into the ruck with oaths and yells and helped drive the men forward.

Fleming descried the lad he sought standing by the bulwark, bewildered, wiping his eyes, afraid for his life. Apparently this foretaste of life on the bounding billows had shattered certain cherished illusions. He was so absurdly out of place among the other foremast hands that Fleming smiled grimly. The fugitive schoolboy was strongly built and his cheeks were rosy. He looked so very much like his sister that Fleming had no need to question him.

If he were to be rescued from this infernal ship, it must be done on the instant. Already the despotic sway of the quarterdeck and the iron law of the sea had detached the Ticonderoga from the shore that lay so close on either hand. The capstan bars were manned and the tug was passing a hawser aboard. Notwithstanding the efforts of runners and shipping-masters, spurred by the offer of head-money, to muster a full crew for this notorious vessel, Fleming saw that she was short-handed. It was hopelessly futile to

beg for Arthur Breck's release. Weak and sick as he was, his head throbbing with pain and with the burning intensity of his thoughts, Stephen Fleming flinched not for a moment from what he was about to do. A hard and sometimes reckless life had not loosed the bonds of his elemental code of conduct. A man kept his word and stood by his friends.

Fleming walked aft. His bronzed face, paler than usual, was grave and composed and he carried himself with the easy, reliant swing that was so characteristic of him. What with this demeanor and the bandaged head, he suggested an intrepid soldier ready to face a firing squad under the open sky. He climbed the ladder to the poop where Captain Doane stood shouting profane orders to his mates. The old man stopped short and dug his knuckles into his faded blue eyes. Agitated and incredulous, caught off his guard, he could only falter:

'*You* again? What do you want? Think you can blackmail me, hey?'

Fleming gazed at him. Guilt was written in every wrinkle of the aged sinner's lineaments.

'So you were not too drunk to remember the cab,' was the slow reply. 'I might have spoiled your dirty scheme for you and had you removed from this ship, but it was an unlucky night. It is too late now. I have other business with you.'

Captain Doane chewed his lip and his glance was shifty. This unexpected visitation was ominous and he could not fathom it. He did not dare to bluster or to threaten.

Fleming read his uneasy mind and laughed contemptuously as he continued: 'I haven't told, much as I wish to. You win this time. You shipped a lad that I have promised to take out of this ship. There he is, just picking himself up from the forehatch where your beast of a second mate

knocked him down. You will refuse to give him up. I know that. He has signed articles and he belongs to you. And if I told you the truth about him, it would not budge him one inch. I am willing to go in his place if you will send him ashore. You know what kind of a seaman I am. It's a bully bargain for you.'

The master of the Ticonderoga tugged at his beard and blinked from under his shaggy brows. The situation baffled his vocabulary. The one man in the world of whom he was afraid was offering to deliver himself into his hands. The bandages suggested an explanation. Fleming had been hurt in a fight or an accident and was a trifle daffy.

Before replying, the skipper turned to look for one of his mates, but Fleming growled: 'No, you don't. You are not going to shanghai me as an extra hand. My boatman is aboard and his skiff is towing alongside. He has orders to keep a weather eye lifted. I'll stand by the bargain. Put the boy overside, in charge of my boatman, and I go for'ard.'

'Very well. I'm glad to oblige you,' said the captain, speaking mildly as if to humor the madman. He crooked a finger at the steward and sent him running to fetch the second mate. To Fleming he added; 'The boy will go ashore in your boat, at once. You look battered up. Better take it easy for a day or two. You needn't turn out with the watch for the present.'

Fleming eyed him narrowly, surprised by this humane speech and surmising that something evil lay behind it. He was about to go forward, but Captain Doane detained him with a sharp command.

'Here, my man. Stay where you are. I'll attend to you in a few minutes.'

The second mate came bustling up. He was a stranger to Fleming.

'Take this man for'ard, Mr. McCann,' said the captain. 'He is sick. Put him in the fo'c'sle and keep him there and don't let any of the hands go near him until we make sail and drop the pilot.'

Fleming understood the ruse. Captain Doane feared he might talk to the crew and incite a mutiny in harbor, or try to send some word ashore that might betray the dark secret of the ship's destiny. It was useless to resist. Fleming waited in silence while the message went forward to bundle Arthur Breck and his dunnage into the trailing skiff. He saw the boy hurry to the bulwark, wave his hand in glad farewell to the Ticonderoga, and scramble down the rope ladder without in the least understanding the why or wherefore.

Fleming dashed to the rail to shout a message for Angela, some frantic word of explanation, but Captain Doane was alert and tripped him in the nick of time. Shorn of his accustomed agility, Fleming was confused by the jarring fall, and, as he picked himself up, the skipper and the second mate grappled with him and thrust him down the poop-ladder to the deck below.

The ship was under way and the seamen were swarming aloft to loosen the sails, as she swung in the churning wake of the tug. Stephen Fleming paid no heed to the familiar sights and sounds, but suffered himself to be shut up in the reeking forecastle, where he flung himself into a bunk and found no comfort in his deed of self-sacrifice. Benumbed in mind and body, his reflections reiterated the conviction that there had been no other way. Were he better acquainted with landsmen and their customs, he might have found some other course of action. A lawyer would have assailed the ship, perhaps, with writs of injunction, *habeas corpus*, or what not, and demanded young Arthur Breck as a minor unlawfully distrained. As Fleming viewed it, how-

ever, there was one law for the land and another for the sea, and a master was supreme on his own deck.

There was no dodging the fact that his situation was desperate. Captain Reuben Doane intended to take advantage of it. A kindly twist of fortune had put an end to the misgivings that had plagued him on the heels of that midnight meeting with his former mate. If it was so planned that the ship was not to see port again, then it was not hard to comprehend that Fleming's chance of surviving the voyage was of the slenderest. He had deliberately signed his own death-warrant.

Beaten and helpless as he was, the courage and resiliency of his virile youth were assets not to be disregarded. He would not go under without a struggle, and it was a long lane that had no turning. Alas, what would his dear friends in Stonehaven think of him? Arthur Breck could not solve the mystery for them. For a little while he had dwelt in a magic realm, too fair and blithe to seem true, and now — A hoarse voice from the forecastle head picked up the refrain of that sweetest, saddest of the old, deep-water chanties:

Shenandoah, I'll ne'er forget you,
Away, you rolling river:
Till I die I'll love you ever,
Ah, ha, we're bound away.

CHAPTER IV

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Arthur Breck was a youth of a sanguine disposition whom no misfortune could for long subdue. As soon as he had been set ashore from the Ticonderoga, he dismissed the episode as finished and applied his sprightly wits to the task of untangling the complications that remained as a sequel.

'That going to sea was a most footless stunt,' he thought. 'It got my goat, all right. No wonder they kicked me off. They had me sized up as perfectly useless. I hereby bequeath the salt, wet ocean to my ancestors. They can have it all.'

The boatman had left him at the nearest wharf with his new sea-chest, upon which he sat and swung his legs while planning his campaign afresh. The chest contained his worldly fortune, for what fragments had been left of his school allowance were invested in oilskins, boots, sou'-wester, sheath-knife, and other nautical equipment. He was a derelict and the nearest friendly port was Stonehaven. Having been rusticated for the term of one month, an immediate return to school was denied him. After writing that heroic letter of farewell to Angela, it was humiliating to have to go home, but what else could a fellow do? He couldn't sit on a sea-chest and mope himself to death.

Whereupon Arthur Breck hailed a passing longshoreman and offered to sell him the sea-chest and contents for ten dollars cash. It was a tempting bargain, and, after summoning a brace of comrades to help him finance the transaction, the longshoreman departed with the chest upon his shoul-

der, while Arthur made straight for the Grand Central Station.

'Aunt Hester and Angela think I am outward-bound by now,' he communed with himself, 'and when I walk in and surprise them the scolding won't amount to much. It's what you'd call a speedy, one-act version of the prodigal son.'

This assumption was so cheering that he was whistling when he approached the Penfold mansion in the twilight. Angela happened to be strolling in from the garden, and at sight of the errant brother she ran to meet him.

'Arthur, what possessed you to be such a little idiot?' she cried. 'I have worried myself sick for fear Captain Fleming would not find you in time. Did you leave him in Boston?'

'Hello, sis, you are looking like a pippin, as usual,' was the careless reply. 'Who the dickens is this Captain Fleming? He is one bet that seems to have got by me. What about Aunt Hester? Did you show her my letter?'

'She knows nothing about it. I was hoping you could return to school and straighten out matters with the head master. What in the world do you mean? Didn't Stephen Fleming take you away from that dreadful ship and come back with you? Where is he? Come into the house. Aunt Hester has gone out to dine.'

'I never heard of this Fleming gent, Angela,' protested Arthur, impressed by her earnestness. 'And please don't mention any more captains to me, or mates either. They jar me. I'm easily startled. Say, you seem sort of flustered. I give you my word I didn't mislay this Fleming person, whoever he is.'

His sister caught him by the arm and led him to the library, where she thrust him into the nearest chair and excitedly demanded: 'Now tell me everything about it, and no fibbing.'

'Certainly. With pleasure, only don't pounce at me. Do you mind if I sit with my back to all those ship pictures? They disturb me. Well, Angela dear, the tale is short but harrowing. I got as far as the deck of the darned old Ticonderoga and you never saw such a rough-house as broke loose. In the sailors' joint where I roomed ashore for a couple of days, Dick Mott the runner was wise enough to keep me clear of the other hands, but when we trooped down to sign articles I began to hear stories about Reuben Doane and his ship that turned my stomach. And when the mates began to knock men about before we had left port, I figured that football was just as lively and a lot more fun. It scared me, honest, and I saw what a blithering ass I was, and I just stood and sniveled till a mate with a fist like a ham caught me one behind the ear and stood me on my head. I guess he decided that I was no good whatever, for he damned me a few more and told me to vamoose before he threw me to the fishes. And I vamoosed.'

'Then Stephen Fleming had nothing to do with your coming home?' frowned Angela, her voice gravely troubled. 'Are you sure that no one interceded for you?'

'A lot of good it would have done if old Reuben Doane wanted to keep me on board. I had a narrow escape, take it from me. This phantom Stephen Fleming has me guessing. What is he? A new suitor? Why didn't you mention him in your letters?'

'Because I had good and sufficient reasons, Arthur. Aunt Hester asked me not to. You are so flighty that you would have been running home from school to see him and what he was doing. He will be here to-morrow, no doubt. I suppose he failed to find you on shore and the ship sailed before he was able to go on board.'

'Supposing we put him in the discard for a moment,' said Arthur, who had become suddenly despondent. 'See here,

Angela, I am awfully sorry I flew off at this tangent. Will you help me square it with Aunt Hester? I am really crazy to go back to school and make a better record next term. I shall be as good as gold. I have surely learned my lesson, and then some. You two women are responsible for my seagoing outbreak. You talk nothing else and I caught it, like a case of measles.'

'Aunt Hester must speak for herself,' answered Angela, very sternly. 'I am sorry and disappointed. If you are honestly interested in shipping, you will have to wait until you have earned a Harvard diploma and then perhaps you can get a position in an office in New York and work your way up until you are manager of a line of steamers.'

'That sounds more rational,' was Arthur's hearty verdict. 'You are perfectly welcome to go romancing along about the great old days of square-riggers. The square deal and a few home comforts for mine. But what can I do with myself for the next month? I am an exile, please remember, and bankrupt at that. Use your bean, sis.'

His sister was busied with her own thoughts. It would never do to let this volatile youth spend his enforced vacation in Stonehaven. He would be apt to throw his noble resolutions to the winds and clamor to be included in the fascinating enterprise of preparing the Nautilus for her cruise. The end of his last year at school was near at hand and he must study hard, with no distractions, to pass the final examinations for entrance to college.

'What is the usual program for boys who disgrace themselves and have to be suspended from school?' was her cutting interrogation.

'Well, if they dope it out that they are likely to be unpopular at home, or if they live out West, they put in the time in a little town about twenty miles from the school. There is a jolly, fat rector who takes them to board, and he

tutors them. One of my dear classmates is there now. He would give me the glad hand. I am game to join him, if you say the word.'

'I have never deceived Aunt Hester, but I am so unwilling to grieve and upset her,' said Angela — hesitating before she continued — 'She has been very happy and well and contented of late and —'

'Then why fuss her all up?' exclaimed Arthur. 'You were a brick to keep that silly letter of mine away from her. Confound a sister that tattles, anyhow. Why, this proposition looks as smooth as silk. I am not pining to meet Miss Penfold under the painful circumstances. If you can dig me up some money, here is where I flee under cover of darkness.'

'And you go straight to the rector's house and stay there, Arthur? I have some money on hand, enough to keep you going until your next allowance check is due on the first of the month. Will you promise to be good and studious and make up your school work with the rector?'

'Absolutely a sure thing, sister. My proud spirit is broken. If you look at me like that, I'm liable to burst into tears.'

Angela laid her hand on his shoulder and kissed him with a wistful, maternal air that touched the boy's careless heart. After all, they belonged to each other and she was the elder by three years.

Her smile was fondly confident as she softly said: 'I trust you, Arthur. And I shall thank God in my prayers to-night that you were not carried far away from me in the Ticonderoga.'

With an arm around her waist he told her: 'It is great to feel that you forgive me. And I won't tease you about this mysterious Stephen Fleming man. You behave as though you took him pretty seriously.'

Angela was spared denial and explanation, for the hall clock chimed the hour, and Arthur exclaimed:

'Me for the next train! I left my books and most of my clothes at school, but my roommate will shoot them out to the rector's. All I need is some real money.'

A few minutes later he scampered from the house and Angela went slowly to her own room, where she sat for some time in a mood of absorbed introspection.

She was aroused, at length, by the voice of Miss Hester Penfold who called up, gleeful and impatient: 'I have had the most delightful evening, and so many things to tell you.'

Angela descended and was a silent listener while her aunt rattled on, in her most vivacious manner:

'The Henderson children heard that I was coming to dinner and they positively refused to go to bed. They know all about the voyage of the Nautilus and have been toddling down to the Marine Museum to learn all about the "adventures" that the old-fashioned boys and girls used to send in the Stonehaven ships. Little "Speckie" Henderson had a list all written out on such a soiled scrap of paper. Listen to this, bless his heart: —

My Adventure. Eighty-seven cents and a new baseball bat. Please buy nutmegs with the money and swap the bat to a cannibal chief for a war-club. The bat cost me forty cents.

Dick Bremer's Adventure. Four dollars in cash and a case of shoes from his father's factory. Put it all into firecrackers when you get to China.

Joe Trask's Adventure. Three hams from their farm, a stuffed owl, an air rifle, and $1.67 in cash. Be sure to make enough profits to buy a good turning-lathe when you come back!

Horace French's Adventure. One live setter pup, a second-hand phonograph, and a nickel-plated watch. Buy elephants' tusks with what you can make on the lot.

'As for Barbara Henderson and her playmates,' contin-

ued Miss Hester, 'their mothers are afraid to leave the pantries unlocked lest these adorable infants carry off all the jelly and preserves to be sent in the Nautilus as "adventures." And what do you think of this? When I was going out this afternoon I was waylaid by the washerwoman's small boy who was hovering at the gate. It really affected me to hear him pipe up, "Please won't you take a 'venture for me? All I got is a cake of soap ma give me, and 'leven cents I was savin' up for Christmas. I want a fur coat for my ma. They must be cheap out there where all the lions and tigers and wolfs come from."

'I promised the child to bring home the fur coat, Angela. It made the voyage seem more real than ever. Children understand the world of make-believe so much better than their elders.'

'Do you remember the game we used to play when Arthur and I were tots?' laughed Angela. 'My battered dolls sat in a row in a window of the warehouse on Penfold Wharf, waiting for the good ship Mermaid to come back from the Cape of Good Hope. And while Arthur launched his toy square-rigger, I would chant most dolefully: "Mrs. Captain Rawlins and her family watching for the signal of a homeward-bounder —fifty-seven days overdue from the Cape and almost given up as teetotally lost. Captain Rawlins is in command and his wife's sister-in-law's husband is mate." I used to weep at the sight of those poor women and children all flopped in a row on the window ledge, Aunt Hester. Then Arthur's little ship would bob in sight while I danced up and down and shouted, "Hooray, it is the missing Mermaid! Cheer up, Mrs. Rawlins and all the little Rawlinses. Here comes your long-lost parent."'

'Of course I remember it, Angela. I found those unfortunate dolls in the attic not long ago. Oh, I must tell you "Speckie" Henderson's farewell injunction, and he

was most solemn about it. "You will be sure to carry some specie, won't you, Miss Penfold?" said he. "It was the specie that the pirates used to get after. They smelled it like rats after a piece of cheese. There may be a few of those Malay and Chinese pirates still doing business. And the chests of specie will bring 'em after you, sure! And don't forget the grindstone to sharpen the cutlasses on, Miss Penfold."'

'That is almost too much realism,' said Angela.

'Not with Captain Stephen Fleming in command,' was the emphatic reply. 'I shall be prepared to meet every peril of the deep with the utmost confidence. Of course, we shall carry a reasonable amount of specie with which to purchase coffee, pepper, spices, tea, ebony, and the like. I have consulted the old logs most carefully, and the Nautilus must have a roving commission, to clear from one port to the next, wherever may seem most profitable. I shall load her from here with dried codfish and dressed lumber as the bulky merchandise, and invest the larger part of our adventure in such modern Yankee inventions as sewing-machines, bicycles, typewriters, washing-machines, lawn-mowers, safety razors, and canned goods. These things were not carried in my grandfather's ships, I am well aware of that' — and Miss Penfold's manner became slightly apologetic — 'but I do not propose to fill the hold with casks of New England rum, which I regret to say was one of their customs of trade.

'We must go to Boston to-morrow, without fail,' Miss Penfold went on; 'I am very anxious to see Stephen Fleming about the plans for the living quarters aft. I have decided to make several important changes. I expected him to telephone to-day.'

'He may have been uncommonly busy,' murmured the girl, conscious of being enmeshed in a hateful web of petty

deception. Again she fell to wondering what might have befallen the shipmaster and why he had not come or sent her word that the Ticonderoga was gone to sea. Miss Penfold was too interested in her own devices to note Angela's distraction. With undiminished energy the elder woman hastened to the book-shelves and took down a sea-journal that might throw new light upon the thrilling topic of specie and pirates.

When they arrived at the shipyard next morning, Miss Penfold was pleased beyond measure to discover how rapidly the shapely hull of the Nautilus was regaining its pristine stanchness and beauty. She looked about for Stephen Fleming, but he was not to be found, and a courteous foreman announced that he had been absent on the day before. An important contract was awaiting his approval; one gang of workmen was idle on this account, and a messenger had been sent to his hotel on the chance that he might have been taken ill. The word came back that he had not been there since Sunday noon, and this was Tuesday.

'If he had been summoned elsewhere, he would not leave his business at loose ends,' said Miss Penfold. 'I am sure that he planned to be here to-day. What is your opinion, Angela?'

Alas, Angela had no coherent opinion to offer. To confess would be to make the situation even more disturbing and she was strongly of the hope that Stephen would right matters by a belated return. Puzzled and disappointed, Miss Penfold betook herself back to Stonehaven to await tidings of her adored and missing kinsman.

That afternoon Angela made an excuse to be alone and walked mile after mile beyond the town and among the green fields beside the harbor. Her nerves were tense with vague apprehensions. She assured herself over and over

again that this fluttering agitation, to which her robust vigor of mind and body had hitherto been strangers, was uncalled for by the facts. Stephen Fleming might have delayed in New York to transact some business pertaining to the Nautilus. On the other hand, if he had reason to believe that his private mission had failed, would he not have posted straight home to tell her so?

'If he does not come soon,' she sighed, 'I shall have to own up to Aunt Hester that I sent him away, and that I have been a sneaky, undutiful girl.'

Persistent in her mind was the image of Stephen Fleming as she had last beheld him, stalwart, nut-brown, alert, waving his hat in farewell with a touch of boyish elation, as though rejoicing to go forth on his quest in her service. She returned late in the afternoon and found Miss Penfold a prey to manifold alarms, moving quickly when the door-bell or telephone rang. Already the ordeal had made her look old and weary. Angela's emotion became poignant as she caught this glimpse of the vital part that Stephen Fleming now played in her aunt's daily life.

'He will surely come to-morrow,' said Miss Hester.

'Surely to-morrow,' absently echoed Angela.

To-morrow dragged its slow length along and Angela let it pass without telling what she knew. The shipyard received no message from the master of the Nautilus. Sparring for time, hoping against hope, Angela was silent through another day. Then Ogden Haight called, asking particularly to see Miss Penfold. He had been suffering certain pangs of his own and his visit was in the nature of a reconnaissance. An aftermath of uneasy dissatisfaction with his own behavior had followed that scene with Stephen Fleming upon the railroad station platform. It had been, in truth, an explosion provoked by the chance glimpse of Angela and the sailor hand in hand, absorbed in

each other, in the romantic seclusion of Penfold Wharf. Aside from the aspect of a public row, which was abhorrent to Ogden's code of manners, he was aware, in his calmer moments, that the other man could break him in two across his knee.

Having heard a rumor of Fleming's disappearance, Haight tried to coax himself into the belief that he had actually made the adventurer take to his heels. He ventured to impart this conjecture to Billy Truelove, who was rude enough to laugh.

'Yes, you may have scared him so thoroughly that he is running yet, but I have my doubts. He isn't that kind. You always regarded him with a jaundiced eye, Ogden, my boy.'

'It was rather rash of me to pick a quarrel with him,' said Haight, 'but I was really bluffing him, don't you know, and perhaps I put it over. I told him I knew all about him, and had found him out, or words to that effect, and he couldn't jump on a train quick enough. It was a clever dodge of mine, Billy. I read a story something like it. A chap sent a telegram to a bishop or some other blameless and conspicuous old duffer, saying, "All is discovered. Fly at once." It was just for sport, do you see, and next morning, by Jove, the bishop had flown and was never heard of again.'

Truelove chuckled and his twinkle was skeptical, but he was too lazy to press the argument and Haight found comfort in his theory. He concluded to test it cautiously on Miss Penfold, and, when that melancholy lady came downstairs to greet him, he was ready with diplomatic sympathy.

Bending over her hand he murmured: 'Pardon me for not coming earlier in the week, but I have been frightfully busy. I hear that Captain Fleming can't — er — can't be

found. If his absence threatens to interfere with your plans in any way, I shall be only too glad to volunteer my humble assistance.'

It did not escape her that he was by no means downhearted over the report, but she was too dispirited to call him to account. As one seeking light on a dark pathway she asked, quite gently:

'What happened between you two men? Angela has heard an astonishing story from Billy Truelove's sister.'

He squared his shoulders and sat very erect, answering with assumed reluctance:

'It was a personal matter, entirely so. I lost my temper and talked to him as man to man. He had very little to say, was quite meek, in fact, and left town at once. Of course I — that is, I prefer not to go into details.'

Miss Penfold's comment was a little peal of musical laughter, delicately mocking, almost derisive.

'Oh, Ogden, you do amuse me so,' she faltered. ' You are the one entertaining incident of an unhappy week. So you compelled Stephen Fleming to make a retreat, horse, foot, and dragoons. The mystery is explained. I am sorry Angela cannot hear the Homeric elucidation.'

'I didn't say that at all,' muttered the badgered young man, who had turned pink to the ears. 'Pshaw, I dropped in to offer aid and you ridicule me. Will Angela be visible during the evening?'

'She mentioned a headache,' said Miss Penfold.

'Not on account of that confounded —' he caught himself and glowered as though Stephen Fleming were present in the flesh. 'The town is talking, wondering what you will do now.'

'I have nothing whatever to tell the gossipy town,' she exclaimed. 'And it will be a favor if you will guard my name and Angela's against foolish, spiteful chatter.'

After Ogden had gone, she hotly announced to Angela: 'Yes, it is true. He flatters himself with the utterly preposterous idea that he made Stephen Fleming run away. He has been bragging about it from one end of Sussex Street to the other, I am sure. I was very rude to him.'

'Ogden's outbreak of valor is one of the mysteries,' wearily said the girl.

Intuition may have revealed to her that this phase of it was no great mystery, after all, but such intimate surmises were not for her aunt to know.

Angela was not thinking of herself as she confessed unsteadily: 'I ought to have been franker with you, but I hoped, as you did, that Stephen Fleming would reappear. I sent him away on an errand for me. It was to get Arthur out of a scrape, and I could not bear to cloud your happiness. I did not know who else to turn to. And Arthur came home, and went away — back to school — and he had not seen Stephen anywhere.'

Angela spoke haltingly, surprised to find Miss Penfold more sorrowful than indignant, displaying no more than a flicker of temper as she said:

'Arthur is a little wretch. I should have felt like spanking him. He is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Your regrets are a useless burden, Angela, but let us have no more family secrets, if you please. I am too far down in the dumps to lecture you. However, we can let the fact be known that Stephen went to New York on business for us, and was not routed by Ogden Haight.'

'But what can we do to try to find him?'

By no means hopeless, Miss Penfold flung back: 'I shall send Captain Chester Burdick to New York to-morrow with orders to interview the agents of the Ticonderoga, learn how and where her crew was shipped, and then ransack the water-front.'

A few minutes later, Captain Burdick received his orders by telephone. So rosy and chubby a mariner as he could not nurse a grudge for long and his resentment at being supplanted by Fleming as a professional adviser instantly thawed. He departed early next morning and by nightfall had found his way to 'Peg' Moran's unkempt place of entertainment. That lanky buccaneer shied at the first question asked by this prosperous-looking old stranger and decided to take to cover. Recalling the episode of the impetuous slungshot, he promptly lied.

'Yes, sir, I know Mister Fleming, and it was a shame about him. He was doin' fine, mate of a big ship, but he couldn't stand prosperity. He blew into me dump late one night, less'n a week ago it was. He must ha' blowed his wages and was lookin' for a berth before the mast, said I to meself. Anyhow, he got into a fight right in the hall, and some big husky pasted him one on the nut, and he went out. I run a quiet, decent place and don't stand for no disturbances. I seen him once more, next day, when I was just quittin' the Ticonderoga, bound out she was, and he come staggerin' aboard with his head all tied up. He sure did look down and out. He went to sea in her, all right, in the fo'c'sle.'

Captain Burdick was inclined to credit this glib narrative. He failed to link it in any way with the return of Arthur Breck, and the circumstances were not improbable. He was conscientiously anxious to get at the truth, but he had seen many a likely mate or seaman make a smash of it ashore, and he could believe that after a season of tamed respectability Stephen Fleming had gone astray among his old haunts in New York. If he had forgotten and betrayed his trust in a roaring spree, he might have fled to sea at the first chance, drunk, lawless, goaded by remorse. Honest Captain Burdick asked many shrewd questions but

'Peg' Moran faced the bombardment without winking and sadly reiterated:

'A man 'ud think I shanghaied him! There was other boarding-masters seen Steve Fleming come aboard the Ticonderoga of his own free will and lookin' as if he'd been drunker than seventeen dollars. They'll all tell you he was there of his own accord and went aft to strike the old man for a job.'

Captain Burdick mopped his bald head and trundled off to confirm the story, if possible. Having discovered the patrolman who had been on duty that night, he was told:

'Sure I remimber the case. He was a strappin' man, well dressed. I was for runnin' him in, but he said his head was hurted, and I saw the blood was on him. So I trun him in th' ambulance. He was pickled, to the best of me recollection, soused so he couldn't talk straight. He was turned loose next mornin' after carryin' on somethin' fierce, so the hospital orderly says to me.'

The skipper sighed. This was poor tidings for Miss Penfold. 'Peg' Moran was undoubtedly a rogue and a robber, but his tale was so plausible that there could be no gainsaying it. By way of breaking it gradually to his employer, Captain Burdick mailed a formal report of his investigation.

While this distressing document was *en route* to Stonehaven, Ogden Haight was speeding toward New York to undertake a similar research in his own interest. He said nothing about it. His purpose was to satisfy his curiosity, for the vision of a returned and vengeful Stephen Fleming still haunted his slumbers, and until he could be certain of one thing or the other, his footing in the Penfold mansion would be uncertain. Indirectly from Angela he was able to conjecture what trail the dizzy flight of Arthur Breck had followed, and he, too, came at length to 'Peg' Moran's.

Instead of the boarding-master, he encountered none other than that battered, graceless youth Dick Mott. Impressed by the elegance and suavity of the visitor, Dick was courteous according to his lights:

'This Fleming guy has swell friends, I'm wise to that. I'm going to put it to you straight. You're a good sport and you'll treat me right. I felt like a dog ever since. It was me that soaked Mister Fleming. He was tryin' to break upstairs to find the kid that I was joshin' along as an able seaman. Get me? The boss objects, and Fleming knocks him over the ropes. So I had to tap him good and hard with a bit o' lead pipe to make him behave.'

'Fleming, you mean?' said Haight. 'He was trying to find Arthur Breck and you and this "Peg" Moran prevented? Was Fleming badly hurt? And then what?'

'We were too strong for him, he bein' groggy, and he didn't get upstairs. The kid knew nothing about it, understand? "Peg" had slipped a mild dose in his coffee-cup, harmless, but guaranteed to make him sleep without rockin'. The next I hear of Fleming is he goes to sea, and this precious kid comes ashore. And there you are. What's the answer? My hands are up. Say, why don't you talk to the boatman that put Fleming aboard the Ticonderoga? He's a friend of mine. The way it frames up to me, Fleming was still lookin' for that kid and he wouldn't let go. Game as a pebble, that's his record among sailor-men.'

Haight nodded with a sickly smile. The investigation had taken a wrong turn. It failed to square with his desire. He followed in glum silence to the Battery, where Dick Mott separated a pock-marked, round-shouldered man from a group of loafing watermen and informed him, speaking from a corner of his mouth:

'This gent is a pal of mine, Joe. You can trust him as far as you like. Also he is a side-kicker to Mister Steve Flem-

ing that was first mate of Cap'n Reuben Doane's ship. Now, cough up, I've been meaning to ask you about it meself. You was with him the other day. What happened?'

'It was queer, awful queer,' said Joe, with a twisted grin. 'Fleming he looks all to the bad, and he says to me, "You come aboard and leave the skiff handy, and look out for squalls. I've half a mind to give you a message to wire for me, to friends I think a lot of," says he, "but I may not turn the trick, so I'll see you later." He chases himself aft and runs afoul of Reuben Doane, and they have words, and Fleming points most emphatic at a lump of a lad for'ard who looked as if he had got into this packet by mistake. I drifts aft, under the lee of the poop, and catches a word now and then. I'll swear by all that's holy that Fleming was strikin' a bargain, and it was the limit. He was bound to get this lad out of the ship somehow and he was willin' to swap places with him. First thing I know, the kid is collared by a bucko mate and chucked over the side into my boat, and Fleming he stays behind. And while I'm pullin' ashore, the kid sayin' nothin' to me nor me to him, I see 'em shovin' Fleming toward the fo'c'sle. Why didn't I hang around for that message he said he wanted to send? Say, Dick, there's healthier places than old man Doane's packet when she's gettin' under way. And, besides, didn't Fleming tell me to beat it with the kid?'

'He offered to exchange places with this youngster, Arthur Breck?' almost gasped Ogden Haight. The disclosure had smitten his understanding with the violence of a bodily shock.

'There was no other way out,' said Joe the boatman, his voice respectful as of one who paid a tribute. 'He didn't even know I was on. Somebody had loaded the dice for Fleming, and he could throw nothing but deuces, but he

wouldn't squeal. I've thought about it a good many times since.'

'Thank you,' replied Haight, almost in a whisper. 'It was a fine thing to do. I agree with you there.'

He committed a blunder by pressing so much money on the pair as a reward for their time and trouble that they shrewdly suspected him of wishing to have their knowledge go no farther. He could not bring himself to the point of bribery undisguised and flagrant. His mind was all adrift, for he had never before come to grips with such a moral crisis as this. What a flimsy, ludicrous braggart he had been to boast of putting Stephen Fleming to flight! To reveal what he had just now learned of the man would be to place him upon a pedestal of the most ennobling quality of heroism. These and other thoughts wrung the jealous soul of Ogden Haight as he left Battery Park behind him, while young Dick Mott sagaciously remarked to the boatman:

'I don't quite make him. He's no friend of Fleming's, though. He wasn't sorry that Fleming went and fell off the earth. It's a proposition with a queer streak somewheres. You can put this swell Johnny down as a bad actor. It's just a hunch of mine.'

'I guess you're right, Dick,' agreed the boatman, with a rueful grin, for he was a practical man. 'He gave up money so cordial and easy that he would be good for another touch if we only knew where to find him. We were a couple of boobs to let him get away without leavin' his address. I shouldn't wonder if he was the man higher up.'

As he drew near to Stonehaven, Ogden Haight's mental processes became more acutely disquieting. In an amiable, slack-fibered fashion, he had always followed the path of least resistance, encountering no bracing issues on the way

to train his will for such an emergency as this. If he should keep silent, then Angela Breck might let the sailor drift into oblivion. And even if Stephen Fleming should write to her after months at sea, the Nautilus would be embarked on her own far-distant voyage in the meantime, and Ogden Haight hoped and expected to win a passage for himself in Miss Penfold's ship. Swayed this way and that, now declaring to himself that all was fair in love and war, again weakly repulsing the insistent temptation, he came at length to Sussex Street and his course of action was not yet clearly charted.

It happened that he was seen by Captain Chester Burdick from the doorway of the Marine Museum. That worthy was propped in an attitude of profound dejection, for all the world like an exhibit labeled as a well-preserved specimen of one of the last shipmasters of Stonehaven. So lugubrious was the old gentleman's ample countenance that Haight was moved to unbend and affably inquire:

'Is anybody dead? You appear to be flying distress signals.'

Captain Burdick caught him by the arm, breathed heavily, and made doleful answer: 'You are a friend of Hester Penfold's and that handsome Breck girl, or I wouldn't think of mentioning such matters. I just now came away from them and I haven't felt so broke up since I was pallbearer at Captain Wilbur Tutt's funeral. Maybe you can cheer 'em up some and switch their minds off to automobiles or golf, or some such trifling foolishness in your special line. I was ordered to find out what I could about this young seafarin' man, Fleming, that took the Nautilus away from me and Andrew Claghorn.'

'And what did you discover?' demanded Haight, his voice sharp and perceptibly uncertain.

'About what I guessed beforehand. As soon as I got on

his track in New York, it was all plain sailin'. Same old story. Got full of rum, then robbed, I suppose, had a fight, was all stove-up, and shipped in the first vessel out of port. He was ashamed to come back here. I thought better of him, honest I did, but the facts were as plain as print. So I had to tell it all to Miss Penfold, personally and face to face, after writing a report from New York.'

'And did she believe you, Captain Burdick?'

'Hester Penfold has known me more than forty years,' snorted the mariner. 'Of course she did. What else could she do?'

'Thanks. It's too bad. I'll do my best to cheer her up, as you suggest.'

Ogden Haight went straightway to the Penfold mansion, where he was received by Angela Breck. Her glowing, buoyant youth was sobered by a new dignity that was reserved and inscrutable.

To his hesitant profession of sympathy she replied indifferently: 'I do not care to discuss Stephen Fleming, if you please. Perhaps my aunt may feel like explaining the affair to you later.'

Chagrined by this aloofness but reading in it a hope that the sailor had forfeited forgiveness, he asked eagerly: 'Shall you give up work on the Nautilus?'

A fine resolution burned in her dark eyes and she was no longer indifferent.

'Aunt Hester is really ill, and I am afraid of a nervous breakdown. The Nautilus can do more than anything else to lessen the shock of this bitter disappointment and make her like her dear self again. I shall urge her to make the voyage and I am well enough acquainted with her plans to take them in hand myself.'

'There will be an immense amount of detail,' he warmly suggested. 'I have a certain amount of leisure, and you

need a business man. Of course I am not a tarry young shipmaster.'

'I will talk it over with Aunt Hester. No doubt you could be useful in buying the cargo, and that sort of thing.'

He looked askance at her, discomfited that his reception was no more cordial. Now or never he must tell her the truth concerning Stephen Fleming. He chose to hold his tongue. It was not so much a deliberate choice as a surrender to opportunity. Captain Burdick had once said of him: 'Young Haight is a clever, clean-run fellow, but he's a fair-weather kind of cuss. Too much deckload and not enough ballast and he don't draw very much water.'

The characterization was singularly apt in this tragic moment, because he had been tried and found wanting. Angela had no more to say, and he reluctantly withdrew, ill at ease, and feeling that he had been rebuffed.

Miss Hester Penfold's glad, busy world had been tumbled about her ears and she did not know how to piece it together again. It was Angela who stood undismayed amid the wreckage and became a benevolent young despot who could not be swerved from her appointed task. She was persuasive and hectoring by turn and now spoke her mind:

'Sussex Street is fairly buzzing with gossip. All the frumps and busy-bodies who were peevish because you failed to consult them are saying, "I told you so." It is their first chance to poke fun at you. Now to-morrow you must pull yourself together and go to the shipyard with me and find out exactly what remains to be done. I think that Captain Chester Burdick should be placed in command at once, instructing him to secure young, competent officers who will relieve him of the burdensome duties at sea. He is quite spry for his age, besides which he used to trade at the Cape and the Dutch East Indies.'

'But what shall I do with Captain Andrew Claghorn?' bewailed Miss Hester who was in a mood to magnify obstacles.

'He is very rheumatic and has a cranky temper,' firmly returned Angela. 'Offer him a position as consulting master or something as harmless. I shall compel the two foolish old men to shake hands and agree to terms.'

'I have refused to admit that I, too, am growing old,' said Miss Penfold, 'but this experience seems to have left me stunned and bewildered. I have lost my initiative. It is a priceless blessing to be young. One can rise above misfortune and laugh at hard knocks.'

'Soon you will be poring over the logs and journals,' laughed Angela, 'and quoting Captain John and Captain Hosea to me by the ream. I refuse to let you mope. Do you realize that soon the Nautilus will be towed around to Stonehaven and moored alongside Penfold Wharf — her own wharf? Can't you see her tall masts and yards soaring above the warehouses and her checkered bulwarks, to remind you that she was built when privateering traditions were alive and captains still expected to repel boarders?'

Bravely attempting to divert her aunt, Angela ran to the library and returned with a fat, begrimed little volume that she displayed with winsome animation.

'This will make your eyes sparkle,' she cried. 'I unearthed it in a second-hand book-stall. Here is a deliciously invigorating chapter with the heading, "Showing How to Prepare a Merchant Ship for a Close Fight by Disposing of Their Bulkheads, Leaves, Coamings, Look-Holes, etc." It was written in 1798. Three pages are devoted to telling us "How to Make a Sally." "Having by a Vigorous Defense," it says, "Repulsed the Enemy from your Bulkhead and from cutting up your Decks, it may be necessary to make a Sally to complete your Victory. But, by the way,

the young Master must use great Caution lest he be drawn into some Strategy to his Ruin."'

Angela flushed, abruptly closed 'The Sailor's Vade Mecum,' and stared blankly at Miss Penfold. Apparently the same thought had occurred to both.

The older woman's eyes filled with tears as she said: 'But we have lost our "young master." Do you miss him as much as I do, Angela?'

'Yes, I miss him,' was the quietly spoken answer.

CHAPTER V

THE STOWAWAYS

When the Nautilus was towed around to the harbor of her youth, Stonehaven began to take Miss Penfold more seriously. The voyage was no longer a fantasy. The brave ship, bright with fresh paint and gleaming brass-work, was a spectacle that drew crowds to the wharf and soon attracted the attention of the Boston newspapers. The Sunday editions spread the story by means of flamboyant headlines, and reporters and photographers assailed the Penfold mansion. 'The rich and eccentric mistress' disliked such notoriety, which shocked Sussex Street, yet on the whole it was gratifying to know that the world beyond these narrow boundaries comprehended what she was trying to do.

The last weeks before sailing were prodigiously busy, what with a million and one details of cargo and equipment. Even the treasured journals of her ancestors could not always advise and enlighten Miss Hester. Angela was as industrious as a girl could possibly be, but her business training had been of the smallest and her head was fairly awhirl. Captain Chester Burdick was fully occupied in fitting out the ship and drumming up a proper crew, while his comrade, Captain Andrew Claghorn, behaved more like an insulted than a consulting master and was too rheumatic to be dispatched hither and yon on errands.

In this stress of affairs Ogden Haight made himself indispensable. He had inherited a shrewd turn for bargaining from his hard-headed forbears, and, although his talents had lain fallow, he now rolled up his sleeves, so to speak, and bestirred himself to hunt for wares to fill the yawning

holds of the Nautilus. He was a volunteer who won his footing by dint of hard, efficient work until Angela had to admit, after a wearying day:

'All these bills and manifests and dickering with so many people are entirely too much for me. Of course it is part of the fun to do it ourselves, Aunt Hester, but I am losing my wits and there has been a hunted look in your eyes for several days. Ogden is really our agent, although not officially appointed, and if you wish to know what is going into the ship, you will have to consult him.'

'I really begin to feel considerable respect for Ogden,' was the gracious reply. 'It is quite surprising. I verily believe he is a Stonehaven shipping merchant born out of his time. And he was simply going to waste. He looks quite haggard and worn out with running about night and day, and he is doing it all with no reward, for you are no more than civil to him, I'm sure.'

Angela's smile held the wisdom of the serpent as she rejoined: 'The answer is not so very difficult. Ogden is determined to sail with us, as supercargo, or captain's clerk, or he would even go as cabin boy at a pinch. And he has craftily taken one end of the business after another into his own hands until you and I can scarcely make head or tail of it. It is kind of him, but —'

Confronted by an obvious dilemma, Miss Hester appeared anxious and asked: 'Is it an impossible idea? He would make a most capable supercargo, it seems to me. And the responsibility might do him a great deal of good. It has occurred to me that we shall need another man of some kind, but I had dismissed Ogden as a hopeless butterfly. Besides, it is advisable that we carry a ship's doctor in case of illness or accident during the long voyages between ports of call. Ogden had an excellent professional training in medicine and surgery.'

'That does count in his favor,' said Angela, but with no more display of interest than if she were discussing an extra foremast hand. 'Personally I don't mind him. He is fairly entertaining company and I can assure you that he will be made to work his passage.'

'He has so maneuvered it that I scarcely see how we can manage without him,' replied Miss Penfold. 'My grandfather's ships boasted no such luxury as a doctor, but they always carried a captain's clerk to attend to the routine of trade with the natives of the Dutch East Indies and so on. And so I am to be a chaperon as well as a shipping merchant!'

'It need not worry your dear head the least little bit,' Angela assured her. 'I intend to flirt desperately with Captain Chester Burdick from here to the Cape of Good Hope, and, "thence taking our departure" for Batavia, I shall devote myself to Captain Andrew Claghorn. The doctor and the captain's clerk will be kept in his place.'

Could Ogden Haight have overheard this, his zeal might have abated. His hopes were masthead high, however, and his handsomely appointed office in Boston, formerly the scene of a fickle interest in the stock ticker, continued to be thronged with ship-chandlers, provision dealers, export agents, and other emissaries of sordid and vulgar commercialism.

He achieved a fresh triumph by instigating the Stonehaven Board of Aldermen to adopt by formal vote ornate resolutions in praise of the public spirit and loyalty to tradition of Miss Hester Penfold, who had 'revived the fame of our illustrious port and thrilled every true American heart with memories of the glorious past.'

His Honor the Mayor presented this tribute in person to Miss Penfold.

Miss Penfold loathed the sight of Mayor McHenry as he

daily sauntered past her gate, a silk hat worn at a dissolute angle, and a very searchlight of a diamond in his shirt. He was a walking reproach to a town whose first mayor had been that distinguished shipping merchant, Captain John Penfold.

The fastidious spinster was gracious toward His Honor for once, however, and how could she be otherwise? Standing in the center of her reception-room, he flourished the aldermanic parchment and sonorously declaimed:

'When your noble ship sails out from our fair city, every heart will follow you across the raging main. You are worthy of your honored name, ma'am. You are a successor of them — of those indomitable sailors of Stonehaven who fit — who fought with Paul Jones, of those heroes that went from this town to man the guns of the Constitution in her bloody battle with the Gorilla. It is the spirit which made our forefathers shoulder their cannon and march to Bunker Hill. In the name of the city fathers of Stonehaven I bring these greetings, and long may you wave.'

Miss Penfold was quite overcome and frowned at Angela, who was giggling disgracefully in a doorway. After His Honor had departed with a sweeping bow, the girl stammered contritely:

'I didn't mean to be rude, but if he only wouldn't dye his whiskers that stove-polish tint, and could leave naval history alone. Imagine how startled our bold tars must have been at sighting a Gorilla aroaming the high seas. But the Mayor means well, and Ogden Haight must have put him up to it.'

'Then Ogden Haight has doubly earned his passage in the Nautilus, and I intend to tell him so at once,' cried Miss Hester in her brightest manner. 'The Mayor is an impossible person, but I am sincerely gratified by this official recognition.'

That very day Ogden Haight was 'signed' as doctor and captain's clerk, and, as soon as the news traveled the length of Sussex Street, one eligible young man after another who had adored Angela Breck from afar called to convince her of their merits as useful members of the crew. Most courteously rejected, they went to the club and bemoaned their hard lot, finding common cause in damning Ogden Haight as an underhanded, plotting scoundrel.

Billy Truelove, from his favorite arm-chair, grinned and told them: 'Haight makes you chaps look foolish. He toiled while others slept. You poor idiots assumed that nobody had any show to win except that sailor-man — what's his name — Stephen Fleming. I am no fortune-teller, but if you ask me to read the cards, I'll bet the drinks they will turn up "Trouble, trouble — dark man is coming over the water." It's not so easy to lose a chap like Fleming. Haight doesn't appear to think so, however, so here's to a happy voyage.'

What Ogden Haight thought about the vanished Stephen Fleming was a secret that he confided to no one. Perhaps the haggard looks that Miss Penfold had so sympathetically noted were not wholly caused by overwork in behalf of the Nautilus. An amiable, well-intentioned, and well-bred young man does not suddenly turn villain without more or less wear and tear of conscience. And to rip one's self-respect to tatters involves suffering, no matter how great the stake at issue.

Shortly before the date set for the departure, Miss Penfold said to her niece: 'Arthur has behaved much more tractably than I expected. When I realized that he must be reading about the voyage in the newspapers, I took it for granted that he would come rushing home and demand to be taken with us. I hope he will appear to say good-bye and see us off.'

Angela seemed rather perplexed as she replied: 'That experience in New York may have cured him of all desire to go to sea again, and yet you would expect him to show some interest in our adventure. He writes me that he wishes to go West for the summer, with a school friend who lives on a ranch. I hate to be away from him for so long, but Billy Truelove has agreed to act as a sort of guardian brother and keep in touch with him at college in the fall.'

'Yes, it is best for Arthur to enter college, and, besides, I am afraid he might get on my nerves if I were shut up in a ship with him,' admitted Miss Penfold. 'He is so explosive and harum-scarum. Is that another sign that I am growing old?'

'He is safely disposed of, bless his heart,' Angela smiled, the tears near the surface. 'I shall be ever so far away from him, but I feel sure he will be a good boy.'

The season was near the end of June. Instead of the riotous easterly winds that had whooped through the crazy old warehouses of Penfold Wharf in the early spring, the jolly summer breezes called to the waiting Nautilus to make sail and away. The ship was ready to unfurl that tall and stately symmetry of canvas, like one cloud above another, which makes the square-rigged, deep-water vessel one of the most beautiful fabrics of man's handiwork.

There was the magic and the mystery of the sea in the sight of this Nautilus, East-Indiaman, outward-bound. In the harbor of New York or Hamburg, she would have been robbed of much of this sentimental glamour, but here her presence lent to commerce an epic quality. She spoke eloquently of a closed era of high-hearted American achievement, of a pioneer spirit that had led the flower of American manhood into remote seas where no other merchant ships had sailed, that spirit which in later times conquered the western frontier and made empire in the wilderness.

Her first port of call was to be the Cape of Good Hope because Miss Penfold's great-grandfather, forsooth, had found his way thither ahead of all other American captains, navigating by means of 'a few erroneous charts and maps and a Guthrie's Geography.' His instructions had been to 'sell rum, cheese, salt, and provisions, the proceeds of which he was to invest in Bohea tea.' Miss Penfold hoped to prove herself worthy of this adventurous ancestor, although her trading must be adapted to modern methods and demands.

When the sailing day arrived, Stonehaven was in a mood to celebrate the event. Captain Chester Burdick had been the guest of honor at a dinner given by the Board of Trade, and his mates and seamen were pointed out in the streets as distinguished persons. As for Ogden Haight, doctor and captain's clerk, he brushed aside the barrier of caste peculiar to the old families and conversed affably with the multitude who sought information, from the trolley conductors to the groups of mill hands who wandered down to the Penfold Wharf and stared at the Nautilus.

There was, inevitably, more or less gossip brewed over the tea-cups in the houses of the old families aforesaid. Indeed, it frankly savored of scandal for Hester Penfold, at her age, to go wandering off to Heaven knew where in an obsolete sailing vessel with no other company than her slip of a niece, two doddering shipmasters, and a gilded idler. Obviously she was bent on marrying Angela to the young man. With all its dignity of environment, Sussex Street had a thrifty habit of mind, and something like consternation swept it from end to end at contemplating the probable cost of the ship, the cargo, and the voyage.

The tide served at noon on the great day. Miss Penfold and Angela were early on board, prepared to face the ordeal of innumerable farewells and resigned to the prospect of

being wept over by old ladies who expected never to see them again. The ship had been cleared of all the disorder of getting ready for sea. On deck and aloft she looked as smart as a yacht. Captain Burdick had sought far and wide for his crew of Yankee seamen, and, although few of them were familiar with square-rigged vessels, they were as fine an appearing company as ever filled a forecastle. The living quarters aft, for the passengers and the officers, were more spacious than formerly, and after Miss Penfold had inspected the airy saloon and her own large stateroom, with its brass bed, wicker chairs, and adjoining bath, she said to Angela:

'I intended to content myself with the accommodations of the old ship, but Stephen Fleming insisted on planning all this for our convenience. He argued that we were bound to use modern instruments of navigation and eat canned vegetables in order to avoid the scurvy that afflicted our ancestors, so why not take advantage of modern comforts, plumbing, an ice machine, and so forth?'

'Stephen Fleming was very thoughtful and competent,' murmured Angela.

'Yes, I miss him at every turn, my dear. But I can never forgive him for his desertion — breaking faith with me as he did.'

Angela's impulse was to defend the memory of the missing sailor, but she held her peace. He had been vividly recalled a day or so before this, when Arthur Breck had made a flying visit, explaining that he could not wait to see the Nautilus sail because his chum was about to start for Montana and they had looked forward to making the trip together. The brother and sister had chatted of many things, mindful of the long separation, and Angela told him the sequel of the story of Stephen Fleming, how he had dis-

graced himself and fled out of New York. The youth, with unlooked-for discernment, had delivered himself of this verdict:

'He doesn't listen to me like the sort of fellow that would throw you down as hard as that. And you are not any too certain about it yourself. Of course, we learn to size men up at school, lots better than you girls can. This Fleming must have been a good sort — perfectly bully. And I'll bet he was a sandy lad in a scrap. If you find any more stray cousins of his pattern, kindly send me word before they go off, pop.'

Now, however, Stephen Fleming was banished from Angela's thoughts by the crowding incidents of those last hours in Stonehaven. Friends and strangers alike streamed up the gangway, to wish the ship and her people God-speed, and they assiduously attempted to carry away with them such souvenirs as were not firmly nailed down. Captain Andrew Claghorn had discovered in one of the warehouses the battery of muzzle-loading cannon which had been mounted on the deck of a Stonehaven merchant ship, and these he had ranged in the waist of the Nautilus upon rebuilt wooden carriages. He was anxious to add whatever verisimilitude might make the voyage begin handsomely, and these long brass guns gleaming from square ports cut in the massive bulwarks delighted Miss Penfold. Andrew Claghorn gained much merit thereby and was forgiven for his sulky behavior, which was charitably laid to 'rheumatics.'

At the seaward end of the wharf, a brass band hired by the Board of Aldermen, began to play lustily an hour before sailing time, the repertory ranging from 'Larboard Watch, Ahoy,' to such roaring old chanties as 'Whiskey Johnny' and 'Blow the Man Down.' Small boys and girls ran to and fro, anxious for a final interview with Miss

Penfold touching their precious 'adventures,' which had been duly catalogued by the captain's clerk. Promptly at noon Captain Burdick, red-faced and vastly important, hauled to the masthead the Penfold house-flag, with the blue Maltese cross on the white background, which had been known aforetime to the ports and beaches of the Seven Seas.

All the harbor tugs forsook attendance upon the coasting schooners and coal barges and puffed toward Penfold Wharf, every skipper eager for the honor of putting a line aboard the Nautilus. Captain Burdick waved them grandly away, and explained to Miss Penfold and Angela who were holding court on the quarterdeck: 'There were no towboats when this ship first went to sea, and I'm going to surprise these landlubbers. The wind is right, and I propose to make sail and take her from dock just as she is.'

The mill whistles were blowing twelve-thirty when he sang out to the first mate to send the men aloft. The sails were already loose on the yards and a lively breeze hummed through the stays. Presently the jib and foresail were set and the bow hawsers cast off, and the ship began to swing away. Her stern was still fast, and slowly she fell off until her bow pointed toward the open harbor mouth, while the band played that lilting chorus which runs:

> For the wind it is ablowing and the tide is aflowing,
> And the good ship is tugging to be free.

For a week on end Captain Burdick had been drilling his men in this spectacular feat of seamanship. With magical swiftness the tall masts were clothed with white canvas, sheer to the topgallant sails, and as the last mooring was released, the Nautilus moved away from the clamorous wharf as a bird gathers flight on outstretched pinions. Heeling slightly as she gained steerageway and veered to

follow the channel, the bright copper of her shapely black hull flashed in the sunlight like a strip of molten gold. Presently a puff of feathery smoke gushed from a starboard port and then another as the deck battery boomed a farewell salute to the home port. Soon smaller flecks of sail soared above the lower canvas, for Captain Burdick was setting his royals, and all Stonehaven, massed along the water-front, beheld a flawless sea picture, as beautifully complete as it was possible to fashion it.

Stonehaven had dropped astern and the ship was lifting to the ocean swell beyond the bar when Angela Breck turned to look at the bright face of her aunt and said with a laugh and a sigh: 'I never saw you look so happy. The fairy tale has all come true for you.'

Miss Hester softly quoted from the title-page of one of the logs she so loved to read: '"Cape Ann bore west northwest, from whence I take my departure. So God send the good ship to her desired port in safety. Amen."'

She glanced aloft at the Penfold house-flag, and then gazed with unfaltering, confident vision across the blue ocean. She was answering its compelling summons and was well content. Angela was looking back at the distant town and the bold headlands that swam in a shimmering haze. Her lithe young body swayed easily to the gentle motion of the deck as she stood beside the seaman at the wheel. 'Trim and taut,' he described her to his mates in the next dog watch; 'no loose ends, and rigged in white from her canvas shoes to the dinky little straw lid with Nautilus stamped on the ribbon in gilt letters. And she didn't have to go to no paint locker for the bloom of her cheeks, you can gamble on that.'

Ogden Haight the indefatigable would have indulged in higher flights of rhapsody than this if his opinion of Angela had been asked. It satisfied him merely to look at her in

this idealized setting and he felt that he had come into his reward. He was still a slave to duty, however, and the litter of papers on his desk detained him until late in the afternoon. When he again appeared on deck, it is needless to say that he was carefully garbed to fit the part of the gentleman officer of a smart ship. The double-breasted flannel coat was nicely nautical, without the furbelows of the smooth-water yachtsman.

He was about to move a chair to Angela's side when there was a commotion forward and the hoarse, quavering voice of Captain Andrew Claghorn was upraised in vehement upbraiding. Captain Burdick stumped toward the poop-ladder and descended nimbly for one of his girth. The sound of loud laughter from the region of the forecastle told him that the disorder was not serious. Ogden Haight followed him, after promising to hasten back to Miss Penfold with information.

Captain Claghorn had emerged from a forward cargo hatch whence his voice had first arisen. In each hand he clutched by the collar a dusty, rumpled, dirty-faced youth who squirmed after the manner of a stranded eel and seemed to be begging for his life. Their captor was a martinet with a grip of iron. He roared, as Captain Burdick drew near:

'Stowaways, drat 'em! A pair of 'em, Chester. I went below to see that things were stowed all secure before the hatches were battened down. And these young pests came crawling over the cargo and grabbed me by the legs and asked me to show 'em how to get on deck. There's no sending 'em ashore now. Make 'em work their passage, the danged nuisances.'

The brace of stowaways must have been hidden near a leaky molasses barrel, for they were exceedingly sticky and so generally bedaubed that identification was delayed.

Captain Claghorn dumped them down, surveyed them with enormous disgust, and exclaimed: 'I wash my hands of 'em. They belong to you, Cap'n Chester Burdick, with my compliments.'

The taller and less disreputable of the stowaways, if there was any room for choice, dug his fists in his eyes, grinned at the spectators, and, nodding in the direction of the captain's clerk, cheerfully remarked:

'Hello there, Ogden, old man. Please put me down on the passenger list. None of this working-my-passage proposition. There's nothing to it. And you may run along and break it gently to Angela, if you like.'

'Arthur Breck, you unspeakable scamp!' shouted Haight.

Angela's brother picked himself up from the deck, made a feeble attempt to brush his clothes, and waved a hand at his companion in crime who was malevolently eyeing Captain Andrew Claghorn. Haight followed the gesture, stared hard, and abruptly retreated, as if the sight were actually terrifying. In fact, he was too greatly startled to speak, even when Captain Burdick curiously inquired: 'Did you ever see this other ragamuffin before, Mr. Haight?'

Arthur Breck answered the question with prompt emphasis. 'He has certainly met Dick Mott before. Should auld acquaintance be forgot, Ogden?'

Dick Mott, lately a scout for the boarding-house of 'Peg' Moran, scrambled to his feet, poked his hands in his pockets with an aggressive swagger, and muttered between his teeth:

'The soft pedal, Arthur. We agreed to keep mum until we could get our bearings, understand. Wait and see how the play frames up. Pry our swell friend loose from the bunch and we'll have a little private session with him.'

Arthur Breck nodded assent and beckoned Ogden Haight

aside. The crestfallen, agitated captain's clerk obeyed with singular meekness, lingering only to say to Captain Burdick: 'Will you be good enough to tell the ladies that Arthur is aboard and will join them presently? I hope to explain matters to them in a little while. I must get at the bottom of this.'

At a loss to understand the scene, the two captains went slowly aft, with many a dubious nod and whispered word. Ogden Haight's fright had been so genuine and apparent that they preferred to steer clear of the situation as beyond their ken. It was obviously the sequel of some sort of odd business ashore and, like the thoroughgoing seamen they were, they meddled not with other folks' affairs. As soon as they had passed beyond earshot, Dick Mott shoved a path through the fringe of gaping foremast hands and led Ogden Haight and the other stowaway to the leeward side of the deckhouse.

'Now we will put you wise to a few things,' said the runner, whom the vicissitudes of a battering career had trained to meet any crisis with a bold front. 'After you and I had that talk together in New York, when I introduced you to Joe the boatman, you remember, Mr. Haight — down at the Battery, on a bench it was — well, I wondered a whole lot why you was so anxious to give us hush money. You had us guessing. Now I'm shy of education and my manners are awful, but nobody ever tried to put me into a home for feeble-minded infants — get me? I might have forgot all about you and Fleming if you hadn't spilled the beans that day. After a while I run across a piece in a Sunday paper and Fleming's name was in it —'

'Better show him the clipping before you touch off the fuse, Dick,' put in Arthur.

Young Mr. Mott fished from an inner pocket a page torn out of the most conspicuously yellow of the New York

journals. It contained a leering, sensational story of the voyage of the Nautilus in which the reporter had built up a romance of the 'idle rich.' The heroine was the 'beautiful young heiress,' Angela Breck, and the tragic hero was the dashing sailor cousin, Stephen Fleming, who had been jilted, after which 'he vanished as mysteriously as he had come.' There followed several paragraphs of similar balderdash concerning the 'clubman' who had supplanted the mariner and was to sail with Miss Penfold and her niece as a particularly favored guest.

Dick Mott read aloud bits of this highly colored narrative in a halting, sing-song voice, while Haight stared over his shoulder and miserably wondered how he might escape from the pit which he himself had digged and into which these terrible young stowaways seemed about to thrust him. He and his friends never dreamed of looking at this saffron rag of a New York paper, besides which he had not dreamed of having to be on his guard against such a catastrophe as this.

Dick Mott, whose hard features were more reckless than vicious, winked at Arthur Breck, with a whimsical grin, and said to Haight: 'As soon as I read this piece in the paper, it gave me the idea that Fleming had been double-crossed. There was no mystery in his going to sea in the Ticonderoga, and you knew damn well there wasn't, Mr. Haight, because you heard the straight goods from Joe the boatman. But you didn't tell what you knew when you went back to Stonehaven. You had Fleming where you wanted him and you decided to put the gaff into him. Of course, I wasn't sure of all this, but it seemed like good dope and I felt fretty. Ever since I busted Fleming's head for him, I knowed I owed him a good turn. I chases up to the school where Arthur Breck was bein' fed expensive knowledge, none of which stays under his hat long. He was

packin' up his dunnage to rattle out to the Rocky Mountains or somewhere, but he scratches the date and we sit down to compare cases. He had the yarn straight from his sister, how Fleming had got full of the red stuff in New York and hit the toboggan. Too sore on himself to go back to Stonehaven, he passes it up, and beats for the open sea in company with Colonel R. E. Morse. He had turned bum, that's what his friends had handed to them by this old snoozer of a Cap'n Burdick. I gave it to Arthur, how you knew different, Mr. Ogden Haight, that Fleming was on the level.'

'You were caught with the goods, Ogden!' exclaimed Arthur Breck, loftily contemptuous. 'I was awfully shocked. I am absolutely positive that you never said one word to Aunt Hester about your trip to New York. She had to believe what Captain Burdick told her.'

The youth's patronizing air was maddening, but the victim was given no time to rally, for Dick Mott chimed in: '"Peg" Moran and I had a fight the other day. It was all off. I lost me job and this ship looked good to me. I went one voyage around the Horn as an able seaman and I figured I could make myself useful in this play-actin' vessel.'

'And as the man of the family I felt bound to look after my aunt and my sister as soon as I learned about this crooked business,' said Arthur Breck, with dignity. 'I really didn't think I ought to trust them to you, Ogden, for you won't do. So Dick and I agreed to stow away, and we came to Stonehaven last night and managed to slip into the hold. I might have exposed you just before sailing, but that would have smashed Aunt Hester's plans to smithereens. I knew you were in charge of the cargo and had to be taken along.'

Haight managed to stammer an intention of having the

pair set ashore in the first passing steamer, but Dick Mott fiercely retorted: 'Cut it out, or we'll throw you overboard. We don't want to crab the voyage for the ladies. They're a couple of thoroughbreds. Arthur and I mean to say nothing to nobody until we get good and ready. So run aft, Mr. Haight, and jolly the dames, and we'll give you a chance to be a man and own up yourself between here and Capetown. Is that the programme, Arthur?'

'Right-o, Dick. We shall look the game over very carefully before taking action. I guess I had better march aft.'

'Me for the fo'c'sle and a few words with the mate of this dandy packet,' said Dick. 'He'll have to find room for another deep-water sailor.'

Arthur Breck bore down on the quarterdeck with nonchalant assurance, Ogden Haight following reluctantly, endeavoring to compose his features and steady his nerves.

'Buck up, my boy,' whispered the youth. 'Your knees wobble. You weren't cut out for the part. If Aunt Hester turns hostile and mentions shipping me home in a hurry, you are to stand by and put up a plea for me, understand. You are in my power.'

'This melodrama is all rot,' returned the badgered prisoner of circumstances. 'Nobody will believe a word of it. I have half a mind to kick you the length of the deck.'

'Tut, tut, Ogden, you forget yourself. I played guard on my school eleven, and Dick Mott is so hard that you couldn't dent him with an axe. Now smile and look pleasant. Here we are.'

Angela met her scapegrace brother at the top of the ladder and raised her hands in horror at sight of his besmeared face and clothing.

'You dreadful child, you!' she cried, making haste to kiss him, molasses and all. 'I shall turn you over to Captain Burdick for punishment. Of all the outrageous perform-

ances! What in the world possessed you? Was it that demoralizing Dick Mott?'

'Oh, I merely changed my mind at the last moment, Angela darling, and you are really and truly glad to see me, you know you are. No bluffing. You see, it popped into my head that Aunt Hester's voyage needed a stowaway or two to give it the final, artistic touch. I am pure romance, so don't scold. Where is the owner?'

'On the other side of the deck, with Captain Burdick. She will be very angry with you, I'm afraid. What was the conference just now? Why didn't you come aft to find me at once?'

'We wanted to win Ogden over to our cause,' was the unblushing answer. 'We needed a friend at court, to stand between us and Aunt Hester. We won him, all right. He is anxious to make us happy and comfortable.'

'How nice of him, Arthur. I must thank him, for it almost broke my heart to leave you behind. What about college?'

'I can come home by steamer from Capetown and reach Boston in September. Dick Mott worked it all out for me. Now for Aunt Hester.'

'We never thought of charting you to go as far as Capetown,' smiled Angela. 'You see, steamers do not exist for us. Such anachronisms are barred.'

Miss Penfold had already adjusted herself to confront and solve the problem of the unexpected guests. Before Arthur could beg her humble pardon for his mad prank, she exclaimed, with no trace of annoyance: 'I have concluded not to put you in irons. You ought to be put in a bath. It never occurred to me to provide stowaways before sailing, and yet Captain Hosea Penfold found two of them on his second voyage to Mauritius in 1789. And of course they should be discovered in the hold of the Nautilus.'

'You could not have planned it in advance, Aunt Hester,' soberly explained the youth. 'Genuine stowaways have to be a surprise. There is some class to us. I thought the stunt might please you, so I sacrificed my trip to Montana. I brought Dick Mott along because he was once a real stowaway and knew the rules.'

'You are to share Ogden Haight's room, Arthur. It contains two berths,' said Miss Penfold. 'And he must lend you some clothes.'

'He will be delighted, I'm sure,' and Arthur beamed with a sinister joy. 'Stowaways carry their duds tied up in a handkerchief, if they are strictly according to Hoyle, so we are grateful for cast-off garments and such.'

Captain Burdick elbowed into the talk by asking: 'Seeing as you take it so calm, ma'am, shall I make the other one turn to with the crew?'

'By all means, and if he is a qualified seaman, please pay him the customary wages.'

'Aye, aye, ma'am. Andrew Claghorn will be considerably miffed. He believes in hazing stowaways.'

'He will be consulted when it is my wish, not otherwise,' replied Miss Penfold.

Arthur Breck scurried below and found Ogden Haight seated upon the side of his berth, his head in his hands. He was enveloped in profound dejection. Conscience had made a coward of him and the halcyon voyage had suddenly become a nightmare.

Arthur closed the door, leisurely removed his coat, and remarked: 'I am the original unlicked cub and all that, but you will have to put up with me as a roommate. It's a truce for the present.'

The captain's clerk left the room without a word. He comprehended that in the sight of this rattle-pated youngster his plight was more or less comic. In truth, it held the

essential elements of tragedy. There was never a man of texture so flaccid that he would not fight with his back to the wall. Ogden Haight knew clearly that, if Angela were convinced of his perfidy toward Stephen Fleming, she would abhor him.

On deck Miss Penfold and Angela walked slowly arm in arm, chatting like schoolgirls. The scene was all their fond fancies had conjured. The red sun was dropping into a tranquil sea all ringed about by an unbroken horizon. There was no more land, only the majestic ocean everywhere, nearer and more intimately realized than from the lofty, rushing decks of a liner. Under full sail the ship moved silently except for the sighing wash of the waves in her wake, and the subdued, musical sounds overhead where the cordage pulled to the strain of arching canvas and the blocks piped like birds.

CHAPTER VI

'MAN OVERBOARD'

Stephen Fleming, able seaman, sat astride a topgallant yard, his hands engaged in renewing a worn bit of chafing gear. He rode his airy, swaying perch, a hundred feet above the sea, without consciously holding himself secure and his gaze turned often to the quarterdeck while his mind was intent with its own surmises and misgivings. The northeast trades had carried the Ticonderoga down to the Line and now she was laying a course in the South Atlantic. Whatever black purposes were ambushed behind the patriarchal visage of Captain Reuben Doane still remained in leash. From the day that Sandy Hook had dropped astern, Fleming was watching and waiting. He had made a confidant of none of his mates in the forecastle. He was the only keen-witted American sailor of the lot and he saw the futility of trying to win over this riff-raff of all nations to make common cause against the master of the ship. To tell the others that Captain Doane planned to lose the vessel might have aroused the spirit of mutiny, but what chance had this cowed and sorry herd against the after guard?

The forecastle had besieged Fleming with many curious questions, aware that he had been chief officer of this same ship on the voyage preceding. His downfall was the theme of rough jest, gossip, and a kind of subdued, respectful sympathy, but he lived his life apart from them, vigilant, taciturn, like a hunter on a hostile trail. The second mate, a fighting Irishman of the old Western Ocean packet stamp, knocked the other men about, but he kept his hands off Stephen Fleming. The first mate was a

gross, bellowing braggart who displayed enmity, but it took no form of open violence. It was evident that the captain had given them some particular instruction.

Fleming, at work on the lofty yard, safe for the moment from the possibility of harm, was slowly fitting together one circumstance after another. Reuben Doane was afraid of him — this much seemed certain. Week after week the two had been locked in a silent duel of intelligence and will-power, each waiting for the other to assume the aggressive. And if the waiting had strained the younger man's nerves to the breaking point, it could be racking the old shipmaster no less. Fleming had noted his brooding scrutiny following him on deck and aloft, the sinewy fingers twisted in the long white beard, the shaggy head cocked a little to one side.

'He hasn't given up his infernal scheme,' said Fleming to himself. 'He hopes to get rid of me before long, and then he will scuttle or burn the ship. He is more restless than ever, and I can feel that there is something in the wind. Queer, but that expresses the thing. I can *feel* it.'

By keeping a rough reckoning of his own since the Ticonderoga had dropped to the southward of the Equator, he conjectured that she was approaching the latitude of Saint Helena.

'He wouldn't dare to jam ashore there and strand her,' he argued. 'That lonely rock is too easy to miss, with a whole ocean on either side. But he won't delay much longer, for Saint Helena is a handy place to fetch in small boats if a ship happens to be lost a few hundred miles away.'

Methodically proceeding with the task that had been set him aloft, Fleming clambered up the topgallant rigging to the royal yard, unslung a coil of small line from his shoulder, and deftly began to reeve a new foot-rope on the star-

board side. Cutting away the frayed, rotten strands, he fitted and spliced the slender support upon which poor Jack must depend for his life while his hands are furling the lofty sail. As the most active seaman aboard, Fleming's station was up here when in sudden stress of weather sail was to be shortened in haste, and he was for taking no chances of dashing out his brains on deck or plopping overside in a stormy night because of a broken foot-rope. So high in air was he that the figures of the men moving about the ship were like animated dolls, and the slim, wedge-shaped hull looked incredibly small to rear skyward the snowy peaks of canvas.

Threatening cloudbanks were massing low in a sky that flamed with an angry sunset when Fleming had satisfied himself that the new foot-rope was strong and secure. The wind was light, but it veered in gusty little flaws as if about to shift from another quarter. If he had been in charge of the ship, Stephen Fleming would have stripped her down to topsails before nightfall, and he lingered expecting to hear the mate sing out to furl the royals and topgallant sails. Apparently, however, Captain Reuben Doane was indifferent to the weather portents and the crew idled on deck through the second dog-watch while the Ticonderoga slid over a twilight sea.

Fleming sat upon a hatch cover, smoking a pipe as darkness closed down, and when he lighted a match to rekindle the damp tobacco the tiny flare illumined his face for an instant. As though this beacon led him to the man he sought, Williams, a sailor, tiptoed from the shadows and squatted by Fleming's side. No heart of oak, such as Dibdin loved to sing, was this pallid, stunted product of an Australian slum. He had gone to sea because of a natural aversion to starvation on shore. Toward Fleming he dis-

played a humble, almost furtive, loyalty, as of one moved by the spectacle of fallen greatness.

To-night he had something in mind to say, for he wriggled, coughed, and was so ill at ease that Fleming kindly ventured: 'Anything hurting you? Toothache? Shall I pull it for you?'

'No, it ain't me bloomin' teeth. They're all right, give me proper grub to chew on for a change. I say, Mister Fleming, ain't the old man got it in for you?' Williams hesitated, gulped, and sidled away, seeming to expect chastisement, but doggedly resumed: 'Meanin' no offense, and knowin' how hard you take it if anybody pokes his nose into your private business, but it has an awful dotty look, sir.'

'What are you driving at?' sharply queried Fleming, turning to face the little man, who was hunched upon his hatch with his knees and chin together.

'Don't get hot at me and I'll tell you the why of it. When you and the old rotter, Reuben Doane, parted company last voyage, which the same you was mate of, you was sick of each other and it wound up in a bally row. He was wild to get his hands on you. All right. You comes aboard in the fo'c'sle this trip, and what does he do? He passes the word to the mates to go easy with you, and you ain't felt the weight of a fist since we left port. Even "Bucko" McCann, the second, has left you alone, and he has bruised every other poor beggar in his watch. It ain't out of respect for you. The swine of a skipper was never built that way. The men are talkin' about it amongst themselves. It's spooky, that's what it is.'

'And what do you think about it, Williams?' asked Fleming, who guessed that some reason for this harangue must lie hidden.

'It makes me feel creepy, sir. I've been fogged up ever

since you got hurted that night in "Peg" Moran's kennel, when I tried to stand by you and the big brute of a Dutchman near kicked me to death. Somethin' is hangin' heavy over your head. It may sound silly, what I've got to tell you, but I took notice, I did, and it stuck in me bloomin' head.

'I was aft on the spanker boom when you was aloft on the foreroyal yard. The sheet was hauled well in and the sail hid me from the poop, understand, Mister Fleming? The old man was leanin' against the charthouse, as big and grand as the picture of Moses in the family Bible. The first mate comes up to him, and, though I can't see 'em they must be lookin' up at you on the yard, for Cap'n Reuben Doane, he says very quiet in his whiskers: "Brand-new foot-rope, hey, Mister Whisher?"'

The voice of Williams had fallen to a whisper and Fleming's pipe had gone out unperceived.

'"Brand-new foot-rope?"' echoed the latter. 'And what did the first mate say to that?'

'He gives one of them greasy laughs of his,' answered Williams — 'the nasty kind of laugh that makes me wild to stick a knife in his ribs. I heard it when the second mate busted the Swede's arm last week. And he says, this Whisher says to the old man, "That foot-rope is strong enough to hold him, *but* —"'

The one small word '*but*' carried a sinister significance as Williams cautiously muttered it.

'But what?'

'The old man told him to shut up. If I had any brains I wouldn't be in a stinkin' fo'c'sle, you can bet the change of a fiver on that, *but* — there it is again, sir, the sawed-off bit of a word that sticks out like a sore thumb. It was the dirty way he said it, sir. When I'm hangin' on a foot-rope up so high that I can hear the angels passin' the time of day, I don't want any *b-u-t* in mine.'

'Thank you, Williams. I don't mind saying that the old man has it in for me up to the hilt. I shall be careful of that new foreroyal foot-rope. I imagine that Mr. Whisher will do whatever the captain suggests. He is a worthless lump of a mate and a man. I am in his watch, which is worth remembering. So are you. There goes eight bells. See you later.'

Fleming went aft to do his two-hour trick at the wheel, until ten o'clock in the first night watch. The bright stars had become thickly obscured and the darkness was singularly black, with an opaque quality that made objects close at hand almost indistinguishable. As Fleming relieved the seaman who stood slouching in the faint halo cast by the binnacle lamp, he peered to left and right in search of the captain or the chief mate. Both were on deck and presently their vaguely outlined forms moved to within a few feet of the silent Fleming, who wondered why they did not try to make end of the business then and there. He was in the most helpless isolation, yet somehow he felt that they feared to force the issue. The possibility that he might not be caught napping, the hazard of a struggle with his proven strength and agility, the chance of an alarm that might bring the crew tumbling aft, were safeguards that had often occurred to Fleming as he stood alone and attentive at the wheel during the night watches.

Ugly thoughts, no doubt, were rampant in the heart of Captain Reuben Doane as he walked to the rail and back again, but Stephen Fleming, in his own way, was reading the riddle that spelled life or death to him, and drawing nearer and nearer the truth as a ship fetches port against a head wind by many devious tacks.

Many times he had been sick with dread of the morrow and what it might bring, but now his head was clear, his fingers gripped the spokes of the wheel with never a

tremor, and he reasoned swiftly with a kind of intuitive precision and an implicit confidence in his conclusions. The phrase 'It's strong enough to hold him, *but* —' unfinished though it was, had been like a flash of lightning in a black sky.

The order to renew the worn foot-rope had come direct from the first mate himself and Captain Doane must have been behind that order. Otherwise these two would not have discussed so very trifling an item of routine. If the new foot-rope should be secretly tampered with before Fleming was sent aloft again to furl the foreroyal, if it should give way and let him fall to the deck or into the sea, say in the middle of a stormy night — the thing was most infernally cunning and cold-blooded. Whoever should make the trap ready would not use a knife to weaken the strands: such handiwork might be discovered by the sailors. The splice would be loosened, just enough to yield to a man's weight.

'And the old man would say it was my fault,' thought Fleming. 'I did a slack job — a brand-new rope, nobody else to blame, of course. A bit of careless work and I lost my life for it. And but for little Williams the trick might have been unsuspected.'

He may have read the scheme aright, but the fickle weather delayed it. With no more warning, a squally gust smote the ship, then another, and soon they were no longer intermittent but merged in a shouting wind that had the weight of a sudden gale. Both watches were sent aloft helter-skelter, braces and sheets let go, the sails flapping and slatting like thunder, masts and yards creaking. At risk of life and limb the royals and topgallant sails were clewed up while the Ticonderoga crashed through the rising seas with headlong speed, yawing so wildly that an extra hand was sent to help Fleming at the kicking wheel.

His peril had passed for this night, at any rate, and he blessed the squall that had given him a respite and time to think of some plan to checkmate his foes. He had no other friend than Williams. Even if he should be able to avoid this device of the faulty foot-rope, what would the next stratagem be? Captain Reuben Doane was growing impatient.

When Fleming was relieved at the wheel, he went forward and sought a corner to leeward where he was sheltered from the pelting spray. He could find no flaw in his reasoning, and he cast about, painfully, desperately, for some ray of light that might lead him out of the pit. At midnight he crawled into his bunk, wakeful, tense, still at his wits' end. At length weariness cast him into a fitful sleep. Thus drowsing on the borderland of consciousness, the plan came to him as though whispered by some other intelligence than his own. He called it a dream, but perhaps it was a message from the cherub that sits up aloft and tries to cheer the sailor's hard lot.

Sitting bolt upright, he gazed across the forecastle in the dim light of the swaying, smoky lamp and saw that Williams was sleeping soundly. The other men of his watch also snored steadily, open-mouthed, sweating, half-naked. Fleming stole over, prodded the scrawny Williams in the ribs, and clapped a hand over his mouth as the little man spluttered:

'Aye, aye, sir. Starboard watch on deck. Don't kick me so cruel hard. I'm coming on the jump.'

'Stow the noise and come outside with me. It's Fleming,' was the low reply.

Williams tumbled out like one in a trance, followed into the windy darkness and up the lower shrouds of the foremast to a seat in the top where they were screened by the bellying sail, nor could they be overheard. Their voices

were blown away or drowned by the strident song of the rigging.

Fleming gripped his companion by the shoulder and said earnestly: 'You don't look it, but I begin to think you are a man to tie to.'

'Thank you, sir,' was the fervent response. 'I'll do me best, and I'm primed to go to hell and back for you. Have you been fixin' up a programme, if it ain't too bold to ask it?'

'Well, I have come to the conclusion that you were not very wide of the facts when you told me about the foot-rope, Williams. Now, here is the first move in my own game, and perhaps you will agree to play it with me. It seems to be my only chance, and a slim one. I wish to play dead.'

'Right enough, sir, and do I play the undertaker or the chief mourner? It's not in me regular line, but maybe I can learn a bit.'

Fleming was convinced that a forlorn hope was better than none at all, and an unquenchable optimism persuaded him that in the long run he was destined to gain the upper hand.

'When the first mate sends me up to that foreroyal yard,' he said, after a pause — 'and he is pretty sure to do it when we get another night of heavy weather — I shall slip down the weather rigging, do you understand? And then I propose to hide myself in the hold. At the same time I want you to make a quick jump of it from your station and kick loose that foot-rope. Those lumpers who will be aloft with you won't miss you for a minute or two.'

'And I yell "man overboard" for all I'm worth,' put in Williams, with a shrill, excited chuckle. 'But what are we going to do for a bloomin' splash when you're supposed to strike the water? Blow me, do you want me to chuck a sack

of coals from the royal yard? And how am I to carry it aloft?'

'Not so fast,' said Fleming. 'There is no need for a splash. On a night like this the ship is making such a row that you couldn't hear an elephant hit the water. And this is the sort of night the old man will wait for. There would not be one chance in a thousand of picking up a man overboard, even if a boat could be launched without smashing it.'

'So you'll play a giddy game of hide-an'-seek in the forepeak, sir!' said the admiring Williams. 'Clever, that's what it is. You can be a haunt, a ghost, if you like, and scare the blue blazes out of the bally scoundrels aft. I say, it's great.'

'Captain Doane would put a bullet through any stray ghost, I'm afraid,' replied Fleming. 'No, my scheme is not so brilliant as that. I'm simply going to wait for something to turn up. If you will smuggle down to me whatever food and water you can lay hands on, I'll manage to fight off the rats. I have my eye on a boat lantern in the storeroom.'

'Can you stick it out till we make port, sir? The blighted hooker may be out two months longer!'

'No, not that long' — and Fleming bit off the words with savage emphasis. 'As soon as I am lost overboard, there will be nobody to keep watch on Reuben Doane. And he will say farewell to the Ticonderoga as soon as ever his master, the Devil, will let him. There, the cat is out of the bag, Williams.'

'My word!' gasped the little man, his eyes like saucers. 'No wonder he thinks you are shockin' poor company if you're so sure of your information. Here *is* a lovely kettle o' fish! Sing, ho, for the sailor's jolly life! And what will you do then, if he sends the ship to Davy Jones.'

'I can work out my course no more than a day at a time,' sighed the other. 'Perhaps I can get away from the wreck

in the second mate's boat. "Bucko" McCann is not so wicked as his masters. Perhaps I shall decide to stick to the ship and run the chance of being taken off by some other vessel before she goes under. Anything is better than living in this state of suspense. If the skipper of a ship like this is gunning for a man, he is bound to get him sooner or later, you know that.'

'A pal of mine got his, all right,' muttered Williams. 'In the Pacific it was, and the master called it self-defense. Aye, I wish I was in steam. But there ain't many afloat like Reuben Doane. He's awful bad.'

Fleming hauled himself to his feet, grasped Williams's hand, and said: 'We'll begin to provision the forepeak tomorrow. Ask the cook for an extra chunk of salt beef from the harness cask, and some boiled potatoes. Here's some money to sweeten him up. He will take it for granted that the men are hungry. And there are canned goods in the hold.'

'Never say die, sir, and I'm proud to be in on this. But if you knew the ship was fated, in a manner of speakin', why did you come boilin' aboard in New York to sail in her? Or didn't you find out what the old man was up to till we was clear of port? Strike me blind, but this is a rummy situation!'

'I will tell you all about it before we part company, Williams. You can take my word for this much — the crew will have to tumble into the boats before long.'

Fleming was washing down decks next morning when McCann, the second mate, passed on his way aft, the string of curses in his wake indicating that trouble brewed. The sun had no more than risen and, by rights, McCann should have been in his bunk, for it was his watch below. Fleming turned to look at him, quick to notice the slightest break in the iron routine of ship's duty. Mr. Whisher, the

chief officer, was in charge of the vessel, and he halted his sluggish gait to turn a rum-reddened face, with a challenging glare, toward the second mate. McCann's stubby, bow-legged figure seemed to stiffen and bristle, and his fists were swinging to and fro as he bustled up to his ranking officer with never a sign of deference. The tableau presaged a stormy interview and Fleming was not surprised when McCann's angry voice came booming along the deck.

'It's me own timper if I want to lose it, and you've given me plenty of provocation. Report me to the ould man, and be damned to ye. You called me a soger and a shirker last night when we was takin' the sail off her, me that niver let a man get the bunt or the earrings away from it when it came to goin' aloft in a gale o' wind. It ain't the first time, nor the hundredth, that ye've made me half-crazy with your dirty, underhanded talk. I'll stand straight blackguardin', for I'm a two-fisted man, ready to take me medicine when it's comin' to me.'

The words came in a boiling torrent. McCann had brooded over his wrongs until the exploding point was reached, as a crater blows off its head under pressure of steam.

The stocky Whisher appeared dumbfounded, then swelled visibly and became purplish of jowl like an irate turkey cock as he shouted: 'Shut up and get off this deck, or I'll kick you for'ard where you belong ! What do you mean, you —'

'Kick your grandmother, you walkin' slush-bucket!' discourteously retorted the second mate. 'You'll hear me out this time. And for two cints I'd drive me fist halfway through your midship section.'

Mr. Whisher foolishly threw up his hands, but whether his posture was offensive or defensive will never be known.

With a joyous ejaculation McCann let drive at him, left and right, and the knuckles that had hammered many an unruly crew into submission so grievously smote Mr. Whisher that he was stretched on deck with a thump like a falling hogshead. Blowing on his invincible knuckles, the second mate danced around his prostrate foe, seeking the likeliest spot for kicking him, when Captain Reuben Doane appeared on deck, chastely clad in pajamas, his beard bannering in the wind like a staysail adrift.

Hopping across the planks, his bare feet made so little sound that McCann was taken in flank. Before he could spin about, the skipper had him by the back of the neck and was propelling him toward the poop-ladder and kicking him with alternate feet. A final shove, and the second mate sprawled headlong into space, landed on the deck below, bounded up like a rubber ball, and was for returning to the fray. Captain Doane had instantly dived below, however, and bobbed up with a pistol in each hand, at which Mr. McCann retreated forward with the swaggering port of one who had done his best.

The skipper laid down his weapons, roughly hauled Mr. Whisher to his feet, and the two held animated parley, while Stephen Fleming, as a pleased and interested spectator, said to himself: 'Here's a pretty howdy-do! McCann will be disrated and made a common seaman with a fine thirst for vengeance. And who will be the new second mate?'

This problem may have been troubling Captain Reuben Doane, for after hastily getting into his clothes he held another conference with Mr. Whisher and was seen to gesticulate with fiery earnestness. McCann remained forward, talking to himself and breathing heavily. He was ready to renew hostilities at the drop of the hat. Presently the steward fetched his dunnage out of the cabin, dumped

clothing, boots, and odds and ends on deck, and returned with the second mate's chest upon his shoulder. Captain Doane promptly kicked the loose belongings off the poop, hurled the chest after, and thus officially rid himself of the rebellious McCann.

'It had to come,' said that bold warrior as he stalked aft, stowed his worldly goods in the chest and dragged it in the direction of the forecastle. 'He'll not put me in irons, neither. He'd like to, but it's poor policy, bedad. He knows the men will side with me ag'in' that mush-head of a Whisher, even if I did bang 'em about a bit. They know a man when they see him.'

The sailors had crowded around McCann with no sign of hostility. Even the Swede with the broken arm was in an amiable mood, announcing that the mishap had been caused by excessive zeal on the part of McCann.

'He did not go to proke it,' said he to his mates. 'I vas loafin', and it vas brittle, I t'ink. But ven the first mate laughed, I vas sore at *him*, you bet. Ho, he got punched aplenty joost now.'

Aware that custom ordained that the men should be called aft and consulted in the choice of a new second mate from among their number, they awaited the summons, talking excitedly, but without dissension. It was taken for granted that Fleming would be named. He had been chief officer of this same ship and was the only man of the company qualified to fill the berth.

McCann, no longer compelled by discipline to keep his distance, slapped Fleming on the back and jocularly exclaimed: 'I don't envy ye the honor. If ye can withstand the timptation to knock the block off Whisher, it's a Christian saint of a man ye are, and more glory to ye. He diviled me till I would ha' been hanged for the pleasure of havin' me satisfaction. I put me mark on him.'

Taking McCann by the arm, Fleming drew him aside and asked: 'Do you realize that you have made things mighty awkward for the old man? He is sorry he didn't handle you easier and patch it up somehow. He will refuse to let the men choose me as second mate. And that may mean trouble.'

'I like your style,' was the frank reply. 'On the level, I don't know what's in the wind. I was told to treat you decent because ye had been an officer in this packet, and the ould man wouldn't like it if ye were riled or mishandled. Knowin' him by reputation, this sounded flimsy, but I learned no more, so help me.'

'I couldn't believe that you stood in with that pair. You are a different breed,' said Fleming warmly. 'Come along. The men are mustering aft.'

The unexpected upheaval of Mr. McCann hampered Captain Doane's programme, and for once he was in an irresolute humor, with things at loose ends. As the crew drifted toward him, taking a summons for granted, he faced them from his elevated station at the edge of the quarterdeck and harshly exclaimed:

'Couldn't wait till I sent for you, hey? See here, McCann drops back and quits you, or I won't listen. What is it? Any complaints?'

The seamen shuffled uneasily, looking this way and that for a spokesman.

To Fleming's surprise it was Williams who stepped forward, cap in hand, and bravely announced: 'We thought you would like to hear from us about pickin' a second mate, sir. We take it that you're anxious for this to be a happy ship, if you please, and —'

This bit of sarcasm awoke a guffaw among the crew and Captain Doane scowled darkly so that Williams shook in his shoes and made haste to conclude: 'Mister Fleming is

our man, unanimous like. That's all, sir, and me and the others will go for'ard and turn to with no hanky-panky business if this is all agreeable to you.'

A murmur of applause told the skipper that the temper of the crew was not to be trifled with. He turned and exchanged more confidential words with Mr. Whisher, who was nursing a puffed, discolored cheek. Their predicament was comprehended only by Fleming and little Williams, who glanced at each other. The situation demanded a bold front, and Captain Doane moved nearer the cabin roof upon which he had placed his revolvers before he said:

'You're entitled to speak your opinion, men. I don't deny that, but I am master of this vessel. Fleming can't be second mate. I'll give you no reason. I name Herkert the Dutchman. Fetch your dunnage aft, *Mister* Herkert, at once. No more gab. Turn to, men.'

So menacing was his manner that the sailors obeyed like a flock of sheep, but it was to be noted that they hung together in a compact body instead of scattering to their stations. Mr. Whisher ran after them, bellowing commands, but McCann blocked his path as if by accident and almost tripped him. The men laughed. There was no actual insubordination, but this derisive attitude was significant. A little later, Fleming and McCann went aloft to set a topgallant sail, and, as they climbed past each other, the Irishman said:

'I'm glad he disrated me. He's lost the only mate he had that was any good at all, tho' I say it meself. You know what Whisher is, and the fat-headed Dutchman Herkert will be no more than a dummy. Say the word, and we'll put the ould man in his place. There was niver a chance like this.'

'And be clapped in jail at the first port we make,' growled Fleming. 'Don't fly off at a tangent, McCann. I will back you in no mutiny unless I plan it myself.'

'Think of the poor dogs of sailors he has abused and murdered in forty years' — and McCann's voice thrilled with emotion. 'You have sailed with him before. You know what he is — a bit tamer than when he was young, but with the sins black on his soul. I've heard tell how you stood betwixt him and the men last voyage. I'm hard all through, God knows, but I always stood up and took me chances, and the man that could lick me took my berth away from me.'

Fleming was carefully weighing his man. He knew his breed and was convinced that McCann could be trusted to keep faith. This firebrand of a man was an ally worth a dozen Williamses, loyal as the latter had shown himself. The balance of power had been abruptly shifted from the cabin to the forecastle and Fleming was devout enough to see the hand of Providence therein.

'What would you do?' he asked, as they finished their task.

'What would I do?' snarled McCann, with a lift of the lip. 'I'd set him and Whisher adrift in a leaky boat without food or water, and then I'd cast this poor old ship ashore somewheres so the crew could scatter and cover up their tracks. Reuben Doane has a long score, do ye mind, and I'm the lad to settle it.'

'What has he done to you, McCann?'

'I had a brother once that sailed with him out of Liverpool many a year ago. And I have no brother now. Is it enough?' McCann spat to leeward and said no more.

'I understand,' spoke Fleming as they parted company. 'But hold fast and go slow. Help me keep the men in hand and I promise to be as stanch a shipmate as you could ask. Pass the word that I didn't care to be second mate. That may quiet the rumpus.'

The Irishman nodded. 'I'll stand pat,' said he. 'You

have a wiser head than me own. What you are doing on board is beyond me, but maybe you will loosen up after a while. It was not rum that brought you here.'

'No, it was not rum,' Fleming gravely informed him.

He was glad to be alone. So McCann was for open mutiny and a rude-handed justice that had a certain fitness in its method. The Ticonderoga would be lost, but not at all as Captain Doane had designed it. Fleming knew that he must have no part in such a plot as this. He was too scrupulously jealous of his reputation as a man and a mariner, and better dead than branded as a fugitive criminal with a price on his head. One fact was luminously clear. Confronted by the possibility of mutiny, his fighting strength shorn by the defection of McCann, the skipper must execute his own wicked scheme at once or lose the opportunity. Fleming took counsel with Williams and told him of the Irishman's desire.

'I'd jolly well like to set the old goat adrift,' said the little man, with a grin. 'And it would be a lark to make a high old shipwreck of the Ticonderoga. But it's a hangin' matter and I'm not as game as McCann. No, I say leave Reuben Doane to do his own rotten work and we play our bloomin' melodrama of the dead sailor. The ship is doomed, either way.'

It transpired that Mr. McCann had a keen sense of humor. When Fleming broached the secret of the footrope to him, he slapped his leg and gleefully whispered: ''Tis really comical. Of course the old pirate must get rid of you, for fear you'll appear against him. And now we have him dead to rights. Ye needed more witnesses to make your case all taut, and he kicked me for'ard to help you convict him. We'll put him behind the bars for the rest of his natural life.'

The starboard watch was on deck that night when Mr.

Whisher bellowed, with the slightest quaver in his voice: 'All hands on deck to shorten sail. Lively now!'

The ship was plunging heavily. The wind had again freshened and a hazy atmosphere veiled the brightness of the stars.

Before Williams scampered aloft, he muttered to Fleming: 'Whisher hauled himself up the foremast shrouds not an hour ago. I spied him. What's the bet that he did a bit of work with a marlinspike? He set the trap, and he thinks nobody saw him in the dark.'

Presently Mr. Whisher sung out from the deck: 'Ahoy, Fleming! You're the spryest man in the watch. Clew up and furl that foreroyal or it'll be blowing out of the bolt-ropes. Jump to it, my hearty!'

Fleming sprang to the shrouds, ascended as far as the fore-top and there paused until the other men had moved away from him. The coast was clear. Instead of going up, he swung himself into the weather rigging on the other side of the ship and made ready to vanish. Mr. Whisher had rushed farther aft and was cursing the bewildered Herkert who had made a mess of things. Unobserved, Fleming slid down, leaped from the bulwark, dashed into the empty forecastle, pried open the bulkhead door that led between decks, and crawled toward his refuge in the gloomy fore-peak.

Even as he fled, he heard a long-drawn outcry of 'man overboard.' The grim farce had thus far succeeded. Soon Fleming knew by the altered motion of the ship that she had been hove-to. The hurried tramp of feet, a muffled shouting of orders, and the grinding sound of a boat's keel dragged across the deck told that the mockery of trying to save him was under way. A long interval and then he heard the whine of the blocks as the boat was hoisted inboard after the futile search in a murky, frothing sea.

Then the thunder of the waves against the ship's bow diminished as she fell off on her course with more buoyant rise and fall.

'I am officially dead,' murmured Fleming. 'It's an uncanny notion. I suppose the men will auction off my clothes to-morrow.'

Thereupon he fell asleep, his head pillowed on a bag of oakum. The knowledge that, for one night at least, he was freed of alarms and secure against villainy was like a powerful sedative. It must have been hours and hours later when he blinked at the darkness, stretched himself, and lighted the lantern. After a hearty meal of salt beef and hard bread, and a long pull at the pannikin of lukewarm water, he waited as patiently as possible for the faithful Williams.

At last the sailor came creeping and clambering to the nook against the inner sheathing of the hull, and exclaimed, with a high-pitched giggle: 'I never did see a poor sailorman lost any handsomer. Life-buoys flung over, boat ploughin' the ragin' billows, Whisher himself in the sternsheets, the old man singin' out as anxious as you please. Plump to the bottom of the ocean you had sunk, poor beggar. Couldn't swim a stroke. There weren't a dry eye in the ship.'

'And how long since I was drowned?'

'It's the middle of the forenoon watch, sir. Bright weather and crackin' on sail.'

'The old rip wants to hustle her along,' said Fleming. 'He has marked the spot on the chart, no doubt, where he can most conveniently cast her away. Well, I am off his hands and that midnight cab ride in New York will haunt him no longer. How is McCann?'

'In a blisterin' temper. Ripe for anything. I had the bloomin' shivers when I piped up "man overboard" after

unreevin' that new foot-rope and kickin' one end of it loose. I couldn't rest till I found you was really and truly stowed away below here. What's next?'

'I can endure this for a week or so, but it won't be that long. Tell McCann to say nothing to the crew, and please send him to see me when he finds a chance. And don't forget to watch Reuben Doane and Whisher.'

Williams stole away and Fleming waited through interminable hours. At length he picked up the lantern and crept cautiously from the forepeak into the forward cargo hold, over and among the cases of merchandise which were tiered and braced against shifting. Bruising his shins on one of a row of crated cans of large size, he noted that they were marked 'lubricating oil.' With no more than a glimmering suspicion, he slashed open a tin cover with his heavy pocket-knife, bent back the edges, and thrust his hand inside.

'Water, by Jupiter!' he cried as he sniffed at his dripping fingers and then laid his tongue to them. 'This looks as if it might be a fake cargo. Let's try again.'

Wriggling farther aft, he came upon a small mountain of cases that were lettered as hardware of various sorts. Hacking at the soft pine boards, he ripped open one box after another. All of them were filled with common brick. A lurch of the ship dislodged his lantern and the jar extinguished it. He delayed relighting it. This latest revelation clinched a surmise which had seemed almost too audacious to be true.

'This is a bigger job than I reckoned,' thought he. 'It is rotten through and through, ship, cargo, owners, and captain. Lord, what a scheme to cheat the underwriters! Why, Reuben Doane is compelled to lose the Ticonderoga at sea, for he dare not take her into any port, with this counterfeit cargo in her.'

Fleming heard a low whistle from the direction of the forepeak and he made his way thither. McCann was groping about and softly swearing.

'I thought you had turned ghost and flew the coop,' said he. 'S-s-s-h!' and he gripped Fleming's elbow. 'Don't light the lantern. It may be rats, but I heard a funny noise. It came from yonder in the hold. You are so light-footed yourself that I niver heard ye coming, but — listen. That noise is like some one was fallin' downstairs. There is not sea enough for the cargo to be tumblin' about.'

The sense of touch enabled Fleming to retrace his course along the route he had already traversed, while McCann followed close behind. Whatever small sounds their passage made were inaudible above the incessant creaking and crying of straining timbers, all the complaining voices of a ship's hull. Past the tiers of bogus lubricating oil and hardware they ventured into unknown darkness, but McCann had watched the stevedores stow the cargo and Fleming was familiar with every corner of the vessel's hold.

Surmounting a rough partition or bulkhead separating the various kinds of freight, they beheld the yellow spark of a lantern bob and vanish like a will-o'-the-wisp. It had moved toward the starboard side, somewhat forward of amidships. McCann felt for his comrade's hand and squeezed it tight. A moment later the uneasy bit of light was seen again, dipping downward below the ship's waterline.

'Did ye get him?' whispered McCann. 'I did. I saw his old mug by the glow from his own glim. I can take me oath on it.'

'So can I,' tremulously breathed Fleming. 'Move a little nearer to him. Has he doused his light?'

They wormed past the next barrier, pausing to crouch

behind the screening cargo. There was a considerable noise as of boxes being shoved this way and that, such as had first caught the quick ear of McCann. A long wait, and they heard something like a rat gnawing, only no rat was ever equipped with teeth so sharp and energy so continuous. At length the steady grinding, woody crunch of steel against planking ceased, was renewed, again became silent, and was heard once more, three times in all. Finally there was the tap, tap, of a muffled hammer. Then the invisible toiler raised his lantern. Its tiny glow drove the darkness away from the massive head and majestic beard of Captain Reuben Doane.

He climbed slowly and heavily from his hiding-place, the lantern burning dim, stumbled toward the stern of the ship, and the watchers could hear the asthmatic grunts that attended his labored progress. Long after he had gone, they lay and listened to the sob and gush of water from far down in the hold where he had been.

No word passed until they were in the forepeak, when McCann wiped his dripping face with his sleeve and muttered: 'Three auger-holes. He'd bore no more, not wanting her to drown too fast. And did ye hear him nail the inner sheathing back in place, so the carpenter won't be able to find the leak? Can you locate it again, Fleming?'

'Yes, I know exactly where it is. We can get at it, if we have occasion to. He couldn't bore quite as far down as he hoped to. It is about ten feet from the keel to the auger-holes.'

He laughed aloud, and there was a masterful note in his voice as he went on: 'Let him have his own way. You and Williams and I will gamble for the biggest stake of our lives.'

'Whatever you say goes with me,' said McCann, in the best of humor. 'I'll duck in again to-night for a chat. This is a voyage to amuse a man, and no mistake.'

Several hours after this, Fleming in his lonely cavern detected the sough and clank of pump and brake-beam overhead and was aware of the tidings that Williams crept in to confirm after dark.

'The heavy weather has strained her seams somethin' horrid,' was the solemn statement, delivered with an eyelid on his cheek. 'She's old and played out, an' leakin' bad since noon. The skipper took the carpenter below, but they couldn't find it. We are pumpin' most industrious, but the Atlantic Ocean is gainin' slow and steady.'

'And how long will she stay afloat?'

'Well, there ain't what you'd call ginger in the way the crew is pumpin'. They'd be jolly well pleased to see the sufferin' hooker founder and the old man with her, since I told 'em Saint Helena was a comfortable run in the boats.'

'Has the captain laid his course for the island?'

'There ain't a breath of wind. The sails hang up and down. We're becalmed and not a vessel in sight.'

'Good enough, Williams. I will measure the water in her to-night and figure how long she is likely to last. Things are coming our way. Now mind what I tell you and keep it tight between your teeth. When the time comes, and the crew is ordered into the boats, you are to sneak down here and stay with me. McCann will join us.'

'Stick in a sinkin' ship?' faltered the other. 'I say, is it all right?'

'Right as a die. I am no more anxious to drown than you are.'

'Then I stand by. Will they be lookin' for me and McCann?'

'Small chance of it. It will be every man for himself. If you are not in the captain's boat he will think you have got away with one of the mates.'

Three days later the Ticonderoga was rolling sluggishly to

the weight of the swells, her black sides streaming almost to her channels. Her every motion was weary, spent, as if, in truth, she had outlived her destiny and was about to seek a fitting end of her voyaging. The crew no longer tried to save the dying ship. Worn out by futile toil at the pumps, they stood about, dumbly patient, forlornly resigned to the inevitable. They were not surprised when the captain summoned them aft and proclaimed in his big, resonant way:

'It's no use, men. If it comes on to blow, she will drop from under our feet and we can't get away from her. You have been pumping your souls out, and there's near ten feet of water in the hold. She is a good ship, but her time has come. Put the boats over and provision them, Mr. Whisher. We shall abandon her before sunset.'

With little confusion, because there was no urgent need of haste, the three largest and most seaworthy boats were launched and towed alongside, after which there was lively running to and fro on deck. Then, as if to veil this deep-sea tragedy, a driving rain squall darkened the bright sky. The flurry of wind passed, but the rain persisted in a tropical downpour, and the ocean rolled sad and gray under an overcast sky from which the day departed sooner than had been expected.

When the first mate's boat was filled with men, it drifted away to leeward while Captain Doane mustered those remaining and shoved them overside, at no pains to ascertain that the list was complete. By now the misty twilight was closing down, for there had been delay and bickering of one sort or another, and the first mate's and the second mate's boats, which had hoisted spritsails were discernible as spectral shadows far removed from the ship.

'Where's McCann?' called out a seaman.

'And what's become of Williams?' croaked another in the captain's boat.

'All hands are off the vessel,' growled Reuben Doane. 'Mr. Whisher or Mr. Herkert must have taken them. I left them to look after their own watches. I didn't bother to count noses. Keep quiet.'

Perhaps he had already noticed their absence and was glad to be rid of their company. At any rate, he had been below packing his nautical instruments and clothing when the other boats hauled away from the ship, and the brace of missing men might easily have escaped his observation. He had no intention of returning to search for them. The abominable business of destroying the Ticonderoga was accomplished and her master was done with her. At sight of his ship, looming forsaken in the melancholy dusk, about to plunge bows under and be obliterated, he passed a hand across his eyes, shook his head, and uttered something like a groan, as if there lingered in his heart a spark of sentiment which, for the moment, remorse had kindled into flame.

The three tiny spots of sail that marked the course of the boats had vanished in rain and gloom when three men emerged from the hold of the Ticonderoga, crossed the littered deck, and gazed long over the bulwark. Their demeanor was undismayed. They silently shook hands. It was in the nature of a pact and a ceremony.

Stephen Fleming spoke first, and his voice rang like a trumpet. 'All hands below to plug those auger-holes. We can do it! They are no more than a foot or two under water.'

'I'll drown meself tryin',' said 'Bucko' McCann.

'I'm game for it,' piped up Williams.

Fleming was again the indomitable young shipmaster as he shouted jubilantly: 'This is a grown man's job. I felt like a whipped cur with all that skulking below and waiting for something to happen. If it blows hard, we'll founder,

but we can get some of the water out of her with anything like a fighting chance.'

'And what sail we can't handle we'll let blow to the divil!' exclaimed McCann. ''Tis all to the good. A red-blooded man couldn't help enjoying it.'

They hurried to find tools and lanterns, and Fleming caught up a mallet and drawknife from the carpenter's chest.

'It looks like our town now,' he said.

CHAPTER VII

TIDINGS

Miss Hester Penfold had expected to enjoy every moment of her voyage. That she might become bored was unthinkable. Alas, and it is a painful matter to record, the good ship Nautilus had been no more than a month at sea when this descendant of the sea kings of Stonehaven confessed to herself, and to herself only, that the daily routine had a certain tediousness and that living in close quarters with so few shipmates might become ruffling. Hitherto her experience of ocean-travel had been in transatlantic liners of vast size, exhilarating speed, many luxuries, and a lively variety of company. It is one thing to admire the deeds of one's simple and rugged forefathers and quite another to imitate their manner of life with painstaking fidelity.

In reading those admirable logbooks, the enraptured vision of Miss Hester had passed quickly over the weeks and months when nothing in particular had happened beyond making sail and taking it in again. And while it was fine and stirring to watch the willing crew of the Nautilus jump to their stations to swing the yards to reef and furl, the edge of novelty became dulled. Captain Chester Burdick, capable seaman that he was, had a methodical, cautious habit of mind, and was satisfied to have the ship jog on her course with never a dash of the unexpected. His career had been that of an old-fashioned trading merchantman, it is true, but he had never scoured about in search of pirates or any other kind of maritime trouble. He really belonged to a later, tamer past than that of which Miss Penfold had dreamed, but because he was almost the

last shipmaster of Stonehaven she had viewed him through a glamour of her own creation.

Before sailing, Captain Burdick had confided to Captain Andrew Claghorn: 'She makes me feel older than the Revolutionary War, though it's been less than sixty years since I went my first voyage as cabin boy in a Penfold ship. I never privateered nor discovered any cannibal islands. She just lumps us with those old barnacles that we used to see totterin' about when we were youngsters.'

'We are a romance, and romances aren't particular about dates and facts,' tartly replied the rheumatic 'barnacle.' 'It's our duty to humor her as far as we can, I suppose, and trust the good Lord to fetch us all home again safe and happy.'

Favoring weather had made the voyage safe thus far, but the happiness thereof was not wholly unalloyed. To begin with, Ogden Haight was a disappointment as an entertaining shipmate. From the first day out he had been moody, silent, and averse to sociability. And when a half-dozen people are confined within the limits of the cabins and quarterdeck of a sailing vessel, one discordant note conveys inharmonious vibrations from which there is no escape.

So inexplicable was the chronic melancholy of the captain's clerk that Angela Breck was moved to inquire with her customary frankness: 'Are you sorry you signed articles, Ogden? You have not been seasick, so there must be some other reason for what Arthur calls your "deep-dyed grouch." You are in the sulks most of the time, and really you are getting on Aunt Hester's nerves. Do you want to go home?'

Too dispirited to resent being scolded as if he were a bad-tempered little boy, the young man replied with a wan smile and a dreary, absent manner: 'It is awfully good of

you to be so interested in my welfare, but there is nothing the matter. Sorry I'm such poor company. I will try to brace up. I have a good deal of responsibility on my hands, you know, and perhaps I have been taking the Penfold adventure too seriously.'

Angela bit her lip, surveyed the disconsolate speaker from head to foot, and said: 'Nonsense! You have nothing more to do except to enjoy yourself until we begin trading operations in port. There is something on your mind, Ogden, and you cannot deceive me with such inane, half-hearted explanations. Please forget yourself and be frivolous and cheerful. I am thinking of Aunt Hester. I can't bear to have her made unhappy.'

The young man sighed, looked away, and drifted to another corner of the deck, fleeing even the adorable companionship of Angela. Determined to make the investigation as thorough as possible, she sought her brother, but Arthur was forward with his disreputable crony, Dick Mott, and a group of laughing seamen.

'Probably planning another practical joke on poor Captain Andrew Claghorn,' she murmured frowningly. 'Those disgraceful boys have set the whole ship by the ears, and I do not know how to manage them. Arthur will not stay aft where he belongs, and Captain Burdick is afraid to punish him for fear of offending me.'

She sent a messenger to the forecastle head, and presently Arthur walked leisurely aft, affecting the rolling gait of a deep-sea tar. Hitching his trousers and shuffling a hornpipe as he drew near, he noisily greeted his displeased sister:

'Once aboard the lugger, and the girl is mine. But harkee, Bill, no violence. Yo, heave, ho, and a bottle of rum! What's in the wind, sis? You miss heaps of fun by being cooped up on the quarterdeck.'

'I am coming down to your level for once,' was the retort,

as Angela descended to the waist of the ship, grasped the surprised youth by the ear, and led him to a coil of rope upon which she sat firmly down, while she lectured him in this wise:

'I do not wish Aunt Hester to overhear us, so you must be quiet and listen to me. You have done nothing but stir up trouble, Arthur, and I am ashamed of you. Aunt Hester says she feels as if she were living on top of a powder magazine. Dick Mott is not a fit companion for you, and I can't understand why you brought him along. He lied and deceived you when he tried to make you go as a sailor in the Ticonderoga, and he is an ignorant, profane, lawless little ruffian. It amazes me, and of course it grieves and annoys Aunt Hester. She was an angel to welcome you two, but she expected you to behave yourselves.'

'I forgave Dick,' said Arthur. 'It was all in his day's work. He is a bit rough, but he is true blue, Angela, and as stowaways we sort of belong together, two of a kind, though we have to live apart. As for raising the deuce, I have been trying to liven things up a bit, that's all. Pasting that dried caterpillar on the lens of Captain Claghorn's spyglass so that he thought he saw the sea serpent next time he squinted through it, and had seventeen fits — well, it helped break up the monotony, didn't it? And there wasn't really a mutiny when he came hollering aft with that silly story that the men were planning to hang the cook at the yardarm because the biscuits were soggy. Dick and I and the bosun rehearsed the plot where the old man could overhear it. He is always snooping around the fo'c'sle, Dick says.'

Angela strove to banish a mirthful dimple, and her manner was fairly grandmotherly as she laid a caressing hand upon Arthur's shoulder.

'Captain Burdick and Captain Claghorn and Aunt Hester are a good deal older than we are, and this is their ship,

and their voyage. We must not tease them. You say that Dick Mott is a "good sport." Well, "good sports" want to play fair, do they not?'

'You bet. I promise to be good. But Ogden Haight has been such a chicken-hearted gump that I wanted to infuse some ginger into your party.'

'What have you done to poor Ogden?' severely interrogated Angela. 'It sounds queer, I know, but he has not been the same man since the day you and Dick Mott had that long, mysterious conference with him, just after you were fished out of the hold. You have been hardly civil, and I have heard you speak to him in a bullying kind of way as if he were still in prep school. I should think he would slap your face.'

Arthur kicked his heels against the coil of rope, cocked a roguish eye, and cried tauntingly: 'Don't you just wish you knew? Arthur Penfold Breck, Esquire, the man-tamer! No matter how haughty and intractable, he compels them to eat from his hand or roll over and play dead. Honestly, sister, if there is a mystery on board, it is distinctly up to Ogden Haight to reveal it. His grouch is all his own. Is Aunt Hester really unhappy about it?'

'She is puzzled and has an intuitive feeling that something is seriously wrong with him. Are you going to keep any secrets from me, Arthur?'

'Not forever, Angela. It has been fun to devil Ogden. He was always so superior and frosty to me, but playing conspirator palls on a fellow. I will talk it over with my side-partner, Dick.'

Impelled by this laudable purpose, Arthur sprang to his feet, kissed Angela's cheek with a resounding smack, and scurried forward to find his comrade in crime, who was enduring the ordeal of having a mermaid tattooed on his forearm by the boatswain.

'You needn't jab the needles clear through me,' muttered the victim.

'Oh, great!' exclaimed the volatile Arthur, instantly forgetting his errand. 'Say, Bosun, after you have finished with Dick please tattoo a foul anchor and a fish-tailed lady on my arm. Does it hurt much?'

'It ain't all peaches and cream,' said Dick with a grimace. 'What is doing? Somebody was laying down the law to you, as near as I could read the signs? Did you lose your nerve?'

'I'll see you later about that. We are due to have a meeting of the strategy board. This ship is getting too hot to hold us.'

Meanwhile, Angela had returned to the quarterdeck, where she found Miss Penfold dutifully harkening to one of Captain Burdick's interminable yarns. Sun and wind had delicately tinted her face and she appeared so girlishly fresh and animated that Angela wondered if her own solicitude was worth while.

An errand of duty called the captain away, however, and Miss Penfold murmured rather pettishly: 'I suppose he forgets that he has told me that story, word for word, at least twenty times. When a man is past seventy and has been dawdling ashore for twenty years, perhaps he ought not to be placed in charge of such a voyage as this. He has begun to break a little. He worries a great deal and of course that worries me. And Ogden Haight seems to have lost all his interest.'

'So far so good, and we ought not to borrow trouble,' said Angela. 'Arthur has promised to be a model boy, which removes one cloud in your bright skies, and we have come a long way toward Capetown, and the other side of the world, the romantic, adventurous side where almost anything is likely to happen.'

'I am a complaining, fidgety old woman. Of course it is most delightful. If you will be good enough to find the log I was reading this morning, I shall finish memorizing Captain Hosea's instructions to a shipmaster seeking trade with the natives of Cochin-China and Siam.'

Angela's effort to clear the social atmosphere so far succeeded that Ogden Haight was more like his debonair self through the next fortnight, and, desirous of letting well enough alone, she forbore urging Arthur to confess whatever mystery was hidden in his active mind. This unaccountable youth appeared to have fallen heir to the melancholy of Ogden Haight, as if there had been some subtle transfer of moods. So subdued and chastened was his deportment that his sister took alarm.

'Are you feeling ill, Arthur? You have reformed with such a vengeance that I fear for your health.'

'Dick and I have a good deal on our minds these days,' he solemnly rejoined. 'We are anxious to do what is best for the interests of all concerned, and these ingrowing ethical problems make a fellow kind of pie-eyed and gloomy. Matters will come to a head before long, so don't pester me with silly questions.'

'So long as Aunt Hester is serene, I shall say not one word to break the spell,' said she. 'But you fill me with forebodings, Arthur. I am very sensitive to impressions and I have an instinct that you are involved in something serious.'

'Oh, hang your instincts!' was the rude comment. 'This is business for grown men, and I am trying to look after *you*. That is what is fretting me to a shadow.'

Thereupon he went after Dick in hot haste and confidentially imparted: 'We must have a show-down. Haight is not going to 'fess up. He thinks we are afraid of making a rumpus, that the trading venture will go to pieces with-

out him. He is as chipper as you please since I quit bully-ragging him. And it looks to me as if he had concluded that we are going to let him get away with it.

Dick Mott reddened with rage. 'He'd better not fool himself. I've been treated right aboard this play-actin' ship and I hate to put a crimp in Miss Penfold's plans. But this Haight person has had plenty of chance to make good and own up that he double-crossed Fleming. I'm for giving him no more rope, not another inch. It has been good sport to jolly the plot along and all that, but this ain't a theayter, and I didn't come aboard to wear gum-shoes and say "*Hist*" for the whole voyage.'

The Freshman paled a little, but replied unflinchingly: 'I'm ready to face the music. It will make all kinds of trouble. Ten to one old man Burdick will side against us. It will put him in a hole, for he swore to Aunt Hester and my sister that Fleming had run off to sea in disgrace. Of course, he was honest in his judgment, but this will knock the props from under him.'

'He's an amiable old mush-head. It's all mushy sentiment this voyage is,' emphatically affirmed Dick. 'The skipper is too good-natured. He went to sea when there were gentlemen in the cabin and gentlemen in the fo'c'sle. He'd last about a minute in the Ticonderoga.'

'Well, if you will come aft with me in to-night's dog-watch' — and Arthur gulped — 'I'll corner Haight and we'll have it out on deck, right before Aunt Hester and my sister. What do you say?'

'Now you talk like a man. A fight or a frolic is my motto but no halfway business.'

'Aunt Hester may be awfully hard to convince. Haight has made himself useful to her. And if she sours on me, good-bye to my college allowance.'

The conspirators shook hands. It occurred to Arthur that

their policy had been rather asinine than otherwise. Their secret was buttressed by no other evidence than the word of Dick Mott. If Haight chose to fight and call this runner of 'Peg' Moran's a blackmailer who had deluded Arthur Breck into making common cause with him, the situation might be acutely uncomfortable. However, the die was cast, and the Freshman was ready to do his duty as he saw it.

As the night drew near, the Nautilus swam in a golden haze, for the departing day was made glorious by the far-flung effulgence of the sunset which painted sea and sky. It was not trite to call the ship a thing of beauty, rare and perfect, the studdingsails spread on both sides, far, far up to the royal yards, with wind enough to keep everything drawing so that she swept over the shimmering ocean like a veritable cloud. In such an hour as this, Peace brooded like a visible presence, and petty emotions were stilled by a sense of the infinite vastness in which this fabric of wood and iron and cordage, freighted with human souls, was no more than a minute, inconsiderable speck. Not for worlds would Miss Penfold have exchanged the exaltation of this majestic solitude for the deck of a 'ram-you, damn-you liner with a brace of bucking screws.' The enchantment of the first night of the voyage was renewed.

'Forgive me for being so flighty and easily annoyed, my dear,' she softly said to Angela. 'We are a fortunate, happy ship's company and we have everything to thank God for. And we wish no alarms or excitements, do we? Those can be left to our ancestors.'

A seaman stationed as a lookout far forward called in a long, musical drawl: 'Something afloat three points off the starboard bow. Looks like a boat.'

The third mate pacing amidships caught up the cry and repeated it to the quarterdeck. 'Boat three points off the starboard bow, sir.'

Captain Burdick and the first mate caught up binoculars and ran to the side. Black against the molten sea a bit of flotsam hung on the crest of a swell, vanished in the trough, and again climbed into view. So faint were its rhythmic appearances that a few minutes later and it would not have been seen at all in the waning, uncertain light.

'Shift your course to pick it up close aboard,' was the captain's order. 'It looks to me mighty like a ship's boat, though I can't make out any distress signals.'

'There may be sailors adrift!' cried Miss Penfold wringing her hands. 'Captain Hosea rescued a good many of them. Wouldn't it be dreadful if they have had to eat each other!'

'Oh, oh, Aunt Hester. You are too realistic,' protested Angela. 'This may be nothing more than an empty boat washed overboard, or a piece of wreckage.'

In silence they watched the distant object grow larger as the ship drew down upon it.

'It is a ship's yawl and a big one,' said Captain Burdick. 'It looks like a man flopped over in the stern-sheets, and there are others on the thwarts. Mr. Ellsworth' — turning to the first mate — 'we'll have to heave to and lower a boat.'

Presently the Nautilus lay almost motionless, her main yard aback, while the second mate and four seamen pulled a cutter over to the drifting yawl and towed it alongside. Those on deck looked down and saw a number of huddled figures holding fast to the gunwales or sprawled upon the bottom boards. Three or four of them moved, sat up, and feebly swayed and waved their arms, making strange, throaty noises as if unable to articulate. The man in the stern-sheets had roused himself with painful effort and was trying to help the Nautilus seamen make fast to the ship.

'Pretty tough case,' the second mate called up. 'Three of them are stone dead. Better slip them overboard, hadn't I? The others are alive, but in bad shape.'

'Aye, aye, we'll hoist up the live ones!' shouted Captain Burdick. 'Leave the others in the boat till after dark.'

The first of the survivors to be hoisted on deck, lashed in a boatswain's chair, was taken from the stern-sheets, a man of herculean proportions, although wasted by starvation. His seamed face was as white as the great beard that swept almost to his waist, his mouth hung open, and the massive head wobbled loosely as if he were at the last extremity. No sooner was he laid on deck, however, than he clutched a convenient stay, tried to haul himself erect, tottered a step or two before his knees gave way, and plunged into the arms of the sailors who were waiting to carry him to a bunk.

His striking appearance and the grim tenacity of his fight for life woke wonder and curiosity among the onlookers. Aged as he seemed to be, there was the vigor of youth in that gaunt frame, else he could not have so stoutly survived in the battle with thirst and hunger that had slain his companions.

Arthur Breck pressed forward, stared at the masterful derelict, and uttered a shrill, quavering yell as if he beheld a ghost: 'Holy Moses, it's Captain Reuben Doane of the Ticonderoga!'

From the group of seamen clustered on the waist came the answering cry of Dick Mott in accents no less terrified: 'It's old man Doane himself!'

The master of the Ticonderoga struggled to free himself from the kindly captors as if he were skirting delirium, and his swollen tongue rasped indistinctly: 'I am Captain Doane. Take your hands off me. What ship is this?'

'My stars and little fishes, we have caught a Tartar this

time!' gasped Captain Burdick. 'Put him in the midships deckhouse, in the sailmaker's room, and make him comfortable. He will need a man to nurse and feed him. Stow his men in the fo'c'sle and tell the cook to make plenty of soup and gruel.'

The seamen were tramping forward, their limp burdens sagging between them as one after another of the boat's company was brought on board. Captain Reuben Doane had been borne in the direction of the deckhouse when from the edge of the quarterdeck there came a question. It was spoken with such quivering intensity that Arthur Breck hardly knew his sister's voice.

'If this is the captain of the Ticonderoga, what has become of Stephen Fleming?'

The cry carried to the dulled ears of Captain Reuben Doane. So unexpected, so startling was its import, that it awoke him from his stupor like the shock of a bullet. For once utterly terrified and shaken, he stumbled blindly away from this accusing, inexplicable voice while the words tolled in his brain like a bell: 'What has become of Stephen Fleming?'

He tried to speak, to make denial, but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and the sailors to right and left of him could hear no more than a foolish mumbling.

Captain Burdick was hurrying along the deck, scanning the faces of the rescued men. The quest was futile, and he swung himself over the side of the ship, footed it down the rope ladder, and dropped into the yawl with its silent freight. Lifting and turning over the grotesquely postured bodies, he peered into their contorted countenances and called up: 'He is not here, Miss Angela. He may have escaped in another boat.'

Miss Penfold had said nothing, hovering behind the others as if shrinking from the pitiful sight which was so

much more heartrending than reading about such episodes in logbooks. Now she moved close to Angela, slipped a clinging hand in hers and whispered: 'I did not know you cared so much. I — I have never quite believed that he — oh, can't we find out? Are all the men too weak to talk?'

'I will try to get some word from them,' murmured Angela with a quick intake of breath.

She went to find Arthur, who was conferring with Dick Mott. Ogden Haight intercepted her, but he was so unnerved that he could no more than echo her haunting words:

'What has become of Stephen Fleming?'

She brushed him aside, and he stood dumbly regarding her as she grasped her brother's arm and said: 'Come with me, Arthur.'

They halted outside the deckhouse in which Captain Doane had been put to bed.

The man who was caring for him stepped out at the summons and told them: 'He is sleeping like a log. You couldn't wake him up to save you. No, he had nothing to say — just swallowed the water and soft stuff I dealt out to him a spoonful at a time, and then he was dead to the world.'

Angela lingered at the door while Arthur tugged at her sleeve and implored: 'Don't make a show of yourself. Give him a chance to come to. Dick Mott has gone into the fo'c'sle. He may dig up some tidings. He says he'd as soon see the Devil himself come aboard as old man Doane. Gee whiz, things are revolving too fast for me. I'm awfully sorry about Fleming. I had no idea you would be so broken up. I ought not to have kept the secret from you, but we thought Ogden — oh, confound it, I can't tell you now.'

Before Angela could rally her wits, dazed as she was by this half-revealed confession, Dick Mott came hurriedly out of the shadows.

'One of them is sitting up and jabbering forty knots — on Queer Street he is — out of his head, I mean, but with a sane slant now and then. I spotted him as a cross-eyed Norwegian that was shipped from "Peg" Moran's. He knew me, all right, and I put it to him hard, where was Mister Fleming?'

Dick hesitated, dug grimy knuckles in his eyes, and blurted out: 'It's rotten bad news. He was lost overboard before the Ticonderoga foundered. He fell from aloft at night, clean from a royal yard.'

Dick fairly blubbered, for his heart was wrung with genuine woe. Then with simultaneous impulse to atone for their conspiracy of silence the miserable youths were about to confess when a hurricane voice shouted: 'All hands on deck to take in sail.'

Dick bounded for the shrouds as the second mate came bustling along to see that things were smartly done, and Arthur Breck, deserted by his comrade, said forlornly: 'I can't tell you, Angela, unless Dick is here to back me up. He is my right bower and star witness, and we swore to stand or fall together. And if Stephen Fleming is really gone, our story can wait. This is no time to hunt for more trouble. Ask Ogden, if you have to know right away. Give him a chance to square himself. Dick and I will see you to-morrow, sure.'

She was too weary and unstrung to desire to encounter more shock or turmoil. What difference could these boyish confidences make? Why all this pother about a mystery? As for Ogden Haight, he had become an unconsidered trifle. Forlornly Angela sought her stateroom and made ready for the night. Miss Penfold, too, had taken refuge

below, and presently she knocked for admittance and entered with gentle timidity as if reluctant to intrude.

'I have heard — but — but — I cannot believe that it is true,' said she. 'If he had sent us some message — if he had not gone away as he did — it was like losing a son — but he was dead to us from that day — still, I was hoping against hope.'

'I was a wicked girl to listen to the judgments of others,' mourned Angela. 'Down deep in my heart I never doubted him. But what matters it now? Stephen Fleming is dead, and I sent him to his death.'

'He was spared the awful torments of the men who died adrift in the open boat, Angela, my darling.'

'Oh, don't talk to me now, Aunt Hester. Forgive me, but I want to be alone. I want to try to sleep. I want to pray. Kiss me good-night, and put out the lamp.'

Without a word Miss Penfold did as she was told, and crept away to her own room to grieve and wonder.

The morrow brought the first heavy storm of the voyage. Shortly after daylight the Nautilus was stripped to a few rags of canvas and hove-to while the fury of the wind steadily increased and the green seas swept the deck with thunderous assaults. The passengers were imprisoned in the cabins, for there was danger of being washed overboard if they ventured outside, and so wild was the motion of the laboring vessel that seasickness was added to the misery of being confined under hatches. Even that gallant young sea-dog, Arthur Breck, rolled helpless in his bunk, and his roommate, Ogden Haight, also a dolorous captive, limited his conversation to groans. The steward, a seasoned, weather-proof person, tried to arouse them with offerings of beef-tea and hardtack and tried to divert them with talk.

'I was yarnin' with a couple of the Ticonderoga men a

while ago,' he said. 'They aimed to fetch Saint Helena when they abandoned the ship, but got blown past it by a gale o' wind and couldn't make no headway back again. Near two weeks they was driftin' about, and the stores and water run out, and it was blisterin' hot. The chief mate and the second had the other boats. Those we saved are pickin' up nicely. The old man, he's a wonder. Woke up clear as a bell, was keen for his breakfast, and flung the pot at the cook's head because the coffee wasn't hot enough. As if it wasn't a miracle to keep a fire in the galley at all with the ship standin' on end.'

'You couldn't kill the old pirate,' commented Arthur. 'He is going to be hard to handle.'

All day the Nautilus was tempestuously racked, but good seamanship saved her from harm. At night there was a hoarse outcry on deck and the companion hatch was shoved back to admit a drenching shower of spray from which emerged two sailors in oilskins who were carrying Captain Burdick between them. Laboriously lugging him into the saloon, they laid him on a cushioned transom and looked helplessly about. Angela Breck heard his groans, and, pale but courageous, hastened to aid.

'Washed into the scuppers and broke his leg. He's old and brittle,' explained a sailor. 'Anybody here that can set it? Cap'n Claghorn has taken command of the ship.'

'I was at the head of my class in the first-aid courses at the Stonehaven Hospital,' said Angela, 'and everything we need is in the medicine chest.'

Ogden Haight heroically responded to her appeal, and together they succeeded in putting on splints and bandages while poor Captain Burdick sputtered and lamented his misfortune.

'There, it is properly set, I think, and will mend nicely if you will stay in bed and keep quiet,' Angela asserted. 'We

are as sorry as we can be, but it is very lucky that Captain Claghorn is on board.'

'Andrew can't stand exposure,' grumbled the disabled skipper. 'A day or two of being wet and banged about will tie him up in hard knots. My mate is a good man, but he is young and he's never been past the Cape of Good Hope. I swear I believe the captain of the Ticonderoga is a Jonah. I'll never rest easy till I see the last of his white whiskers.'

The gale blew unabated through the second day and twenty-four hours on duty that would have exhausted a young and vigorous shipmaster all but prostrated that rheumatic 'relic,' Captain Andrew Claghorn. When on the third day the ship was able to resume her course, although the seas were still monstrously swollen, the doughty old martyr crept below, contorted with aches and pains, and took to his bunk with the sorrowful verdict: 'I ought to ha' been rebuilt from keel to truck, like the Nautilus, before ever I tried to weather another blow.'

Miss Penfold, having revived, insisted on finding a sheltered corner of the deck, because as owner she felt it necessary to take stock of this disquieting situation. To lose the services of two captains created an emergency that her grandfather's logbooks failed satisfactorily to solve. No sooner had Angela tucked her in a chair lashed to leeward of the charthouse than Miss Hester was astonished to behold approaching the tall and venerable figure of Captain Reuben Doane. Suffering had refined his bold features, and beneath his bushy brows the hawk's eyes beamed mild and benignant. Weakness made his gait somewhat uncertain, but he held himself with assured dignity.

'Glad to see you out in the fresh air, ladies,' he said. 'It was a wicked gale, but your fine vessel rode it out without losing a spar or a ropeyarn. This is my first chance to thank you for saving me and my men.'

Angela gazed at him with open dislike and suspicion, but Miss Penfold, ever impressionable to the atmosphere of deep-sea romance, replied courteously: 'I am amazed to see you on deck after your terrible experience, Captain Doane. I trust that your men are doing well.'

'They are tough salts, madam, well pickled in brine like their skipper. I regret to hear that your masters are crippled. If I can be of any service as far as Capetown —'

'But surely you do not feel fit to resume active duty!' cried Miss Hester.

'A day or two more and I shall be lively enough.' His face became grave as he went on: 'I was in a state of collapse when your people fetched me aboard, but I fancied I heard a woman's voice asking for Stephen Fleming. I was unable to reply, but I shall be glad to tell you what I can about that splendid seaman and gentleman. It is most extraordinary that I should have found friends of his in the vessel that rescued me.'

Captain Doane's demeanor was so genuinely sympathetic that Miss Penfold was disarmed.

'Mr. Fleming was a kinsman of mine,' she said, 'and he was to have commanded this vessel. All we know is that he sailed with you as a foremast hand when he went to New York to prevent my young nephew from sailing in the Ticonderoga. From what we were able to learn, we were convinced that he vanished under a cloud. We were given to understand that he had disgraced himself.'

Captain Reuben Doane was shrewdly regarding Angela while he plucked at his beard. So these foolish women did not know why Stephen Fleming had gone to sea! A generous, whimsical impulse took hold of him. He bore Fleming no more malice. The score had been paid in full. Persistently tormenting him was the appealing question of Angela Breck, 'What has become of Stephen Fleming?'

He might sleep more soundly if he righted the lesser wrong and cleared the dead man's name, as a sort of propitiatory offering. There was nothing to gain by defaming him.

'A very sad business,' he said, 'but there was something immensely fine and heroic about it. So you knew him well! A first-class master he would have made for the Nautilus, very keen on his duty, and a most agreeable companion. It was duty that sent him on his last voyage in my unfortunate vessel. I knew nothing about your nephew, madam. Had I understood the situation, had I known there was a college lad of good family in my fo'c'sle, he should have been sent packing, I assure you. Fleming came to me as the ship was about to sail, there was a great deal of confusion, and offered to exchange places with a young greenhorn whom I had no more than glanced at. Being very short of able seamen, I jumped at the bargain. I thought he was drunk or crazy at the time, but afterward I gave him credit for an act of great self-sacrifice.'

'But he must have thought that you were a hard man to deal with or he would have asked you to release my brother unconditionally,' indignantly spoke up Angela.

'The merchant service is hard in these days,' mildly returned Captain Doane. 'You cannot judge it fairly by this trading yacht of yours. A master must man his ship and take her to sea somehow. But I am very sorry that I did not understand the circumstances of this case.'

Angela had ceased to listen to him. A sadness that was not all sorrow brooded in her eyes as she turned to her aunt, heedless of Captain Doane, and murmured: 'I *knew* he had not been faithless to his trust. He lost his life because he had made a promise to me — to send Arthur home again.'

The master of the Ticonderoga, having won the advantage of this first encounter, discreetly withdrew. At that moment there converged toward them Dick Mott and

Arthur, arm-in-arm to sustain each other's courage, and Ogden Haight, whose ghastly pallor was not caused by the ravages of seasickness. A puzzling maneuver ensued. It was evident that the convention had not gathered by common agreement, for at sight of the youths Haight was more perturbed than ever and quickened his gait as if anxious to forestall them. Dick and Arthur fell back, held whispered, agitated converse, and shuffled farther away, where they waited in the background after the manner of a Greek chorus, ready to applaud or to condemn as the gods should decree.

Haight confronted Angela with such a dejected, hopeless air that she felt pity for him.

'I knew it all the time,' he began miserably to explain. 'I have been a cur. I knew that Stephen Fleming went to sea to save Arthur from the Ticonderoga, but I kept it from you because — because — I wanted you to forget him. I let the temptation get the better of me — Captain Burdick made the way easy — but I have not fallen low enough to blacken a dead man's name. That is about all I have to say. I don't expect you to forgive me, but I — I — wish to God I had been lost at sea instead of Stephen Fleming.'

He walked away with a newly won manliness of bearing, as if he had been made stronger, more resolute, by the confession. As he passed the two lads, he looked neither to the left nor right, but Dick Mott cordially exclaimed: 'Good boy! You beat us to it! You will feel a heap better for taking your medicine. We thought we were going to lose out on you.'

Arthur pulled his comrade toward Angela and they faced her like culprits.

'That was our dark secret, sis,' said her brother. 'It was worth lying low and waiting for, to see Ogden brace up and

tell you off his own bat. But it is an awful big price to pay — to have to hear the news about Fleming.'

'Wait a minute,' put in the melancholy Dick. 'I haven't told Miss Breck how it happened that I slugged him over the head. It's my turn to get on the firing-line.'

Angela clapped her hands to her ears, glanced piteously at her aunt, and fled toward the companionway with a broken farewell: 'I can't bear to hear anything more! Do you think I am a stone image without any f-feelings?'

CHAPTER VIII

DISASTER

THERE was no longer any reason whatever why Miss Penfold should find the voyage monotonous. Misfortune and excitement had fairly jostled each other in variety to satiate the most restless and adventurous sea-rover. Her two captains were disabled; the remnant of a shipwrecked crew had been saved from a miserable fate; and the tidings of Stephen Fleming's death made the situation more distressing. It remained to be seen whether the presence of Captain Reuben Doane was to be counted calamitous or otherwise.

His endurance and recuperative powers were marvelous. While his seamen were tottering about the deck, very slowly regaining strength, he had become almost brisk and hearty of mien and was indefatigable in attendance on Miss Penfold. She was convinced that he must be years younger than the whiteness of his hair and beard indicated, but Dick Mott had another explanation, alleging in the forecastle that the captain of the Ticonderoga was either in league with Old Nick himself or was next of kin to the original Flying Dutchman. For once this precociously self-reliant youth, who had faced life without winking at its hazards, showed symptoms of real fear. Whether at work or play, he kept watch of Captain Reuben Doane, and his vigorous appetite perceptibly waned. His anxiety infected Arthur Breck, for Dick's share of the conversation was apt to sound like this:

'He's all bad. In the gay old times your dear innocent aunt is so fond of yarning about, he'd ha' been a top-notch pirate. Say, could a man suffer what he went through in

that open boat and round up all taut and shipshape in less'n a week unless he was born to be hanged? I'm leery of him, boy, I tell you. Look what happened to the Ticonderoga. Look what happened to Mister Fleming. How about that boatload of dead men. His hoodoo is workin' strong. If nothing happens to us before we set him ashore, I'll drop on my knees and thank God, and that's no lie.'

'You can't make Aunt Hester see it that way,' was Arthur's gloomy comment. 'He seems to be getting on her blind side. She wears the real rose-colored spectacles when a shipmaster crosses her bows.'

'Didn't you put her wise to his reputation?'

'Yes, I roasted him for all I was worth, Dick, but she hasn't any too much use for me, and thinks I am awfully young and fresh. As for taking your evidence —'

'She sizes me up as the rottenest egg in the basket, Arthur. You can't hurt my feelings. My tapping Fleming with a slungshot everlastingly queered me with her. And I can just hear old man Doane giving "Peg" Moran and me A–1 recommendations, nit. He'll spike my guns first thing.'

'And Captain Burdick is on his beam ends and old Pop Claghorn will never get over his inflammatory rheumatics until we leave him in a dry spot ashore. At this rate that white-whiskered old buccaneer will be master of the ship before we get to Capetown. Just you wait until Aunt Hester tells him about the thirty thousand dollars in specie under the cabin floor.'

Such an unworthy suspicion was perhaps unfair to Captain Reuben Doane. It may have occurred to him that this whimsical, sentimental voyage offered an enterprising man a tempting chance of bettering his fortunes. For the present, however, he had other fish to fry. The esteem of Miss Penfold was well worth cultivating as an anchor to

windward, but it would be necessary for him to proceed to New York by steamer and make official report to owners, agents, and underwriters of the loss of the Ticonderoga. There would follow a secret settlement in payment for his services with an auger, a sum large enough to keep the wolf from the door of an elderly, retired shipmaster. And immediately thereafter — well, the Nautilus might be still cruising about the Eastern seas in her aimless, leisurely fashion, and he could find her if he should so desire. A little ingenuity might easily separate those chests of specie from their guileless owner.

Although for many a year Captain Reuben Doane had done no intentional good to any one except himself, he was unconsciously assisting one who stood sadly in need of friends, to wit, Ogden Haight. That unhappy young man had made a belated confession. More weak than wicked, he had faced the ordeal of his own volition, and it was fair to assume that he was sincerely repentent. Angela Breck, however, ignored his existence. In her eyes his betrayal of Stephen Fleming held no extenuating circumstances. First from Captain Doane, then from Ogden Haight, again from Arthur and Dick, she had heard that which she ought to have known months before. Then she might have defended him, the brave young shipmaster who had gone away so blithely in her service. She had been cheated, robbed of an ideal, made guilty of misjudgment cruel and heartless beyond words, and now there could be no reparation, no opportunity of righting a frightful wrong.

Ogden Haight, longing to flee the ship that had become his prison, had no hope of rehabilitating himself, but, nevertheless, he desired to make expiation by means of self-sacrifice for the common good. He had helped to plan and launch the voyage, in his hands were important business ventures, and no matter how painful the martyrdom, he

was resolved to endure it so long as he might be needed in Miss Penfold's affairs. He viewed with uneasy misgivings the favor that Captain Doane was winning in her sight, for he was in some ways a young man of shrewd discernment. And with both Stonehaven captains disabled, he was the one man on deck, so to speak, who represented the owner's interests. While a contemptuous glance from Angela sufficed to make him feel weak and sick, his responsibilities were stiffening his backbone in his dealings with men, and he was not at all the gentlemanly loafer whom Stonehaven had held in such trifling esteem.

Dick Mott, who had been schooled to find the elemental qualities of manhood, was quick to discover that Haight 'was taking his punishment.'

'He's not so worse, with all his faults,' he told Arthur. 'He's sorry he done it, sure he is, same as I was after I black-jacked Mister Fleming. We had a talk this morning. Old man Doane can't fool him. He is our only chance to get your aunt's notions untwisted. Maybe she will listen to him.'

Miss Penfold remained serene and independent, however, and showed annoyance only when Ogden Haight tried to enlighten her concerning certain lurid episodes in the career of Captain Reuben Doane, and warned her against taking that mariner at his own valuation.

To such attacks she replied with spirit: 'He has had to handle rough and violent men, and his life has been in danger many times. He deplores with me that American sailors can no longer be found to man our dwindling fleet of deep-water ships. I am sure he has recognized most handsomely the virtues of our poor, dear Stephen Fleming. He paid him the finest tribute possible.'

Haight could do no more than argue: 'He has a grand air, Miss Hester, but his own sailors are afraid to death of him,

and his name is cursed in every port. He is a survival of a type of master of Yankee clipper ships that disgraced their flag with their brutalities. He is not your kind of seafaring man at all. Don't confide your plans to him. Keep his hands off the ship. Let the mate carry her to Capetown where we can decide to do whatever may be best.'

'And do you think you have proved yourself worthy of implicit trust?' was Miss Penfold's biting retort, at which Haight retreated in great disorder.

Not yet utterly routed, he risked the open wrath of Angela Breck and said to her at the next favorable opportunity: 'I expect no mercy, but I want to help you. I simply must talk with you about this Captain Doane matter.'

Angela wavered, perceiving that this discarded friend of hers was not thinking of himself. Quick to take alarm and jealous to protect where her aunt was concerned, she said indifferently: 'Very well. I will listen to you.'

'It sounds hateful to you, I know,' he began, 'but you and I must stand together. I may have been an infernal cad, but I am not so much of a fool as I used to be. Captain Reuben Doane cannot pull the wool over my eyes. And I am sure he has not deceived you. We shall have to get rid of him.'

'I do not like this crafty, sinister old man,' she replied. 'He makes me feel shuddery. And Arthur, who knows all about him, is almost frightened out of his wits. He has bewitched Aunt Hester. She is very impulsive and most difficult to manage when her hobby is involved. But what can he do single-handed? We have a splendid crew, fore and aft. Perhaps our alarms are foolish.'

She did not reveal her most intimate motive for suspecting and dreading the master of the Ticonderoga. Stephen Fleming had been afraid of the ship for Arthur's sake and his hot denunciation still rang in her ears and haunted

her dreams, just as he had almost shouted it at her when they had been together for that last hour on Penfold Wharf, alone with the wind and the washing waves and the tarry warehouses and the gulls crying overhead.

'The ship is infamous from New York to Hongkong and back again,' he had told her. 'He must not go in her. No decent foremast hand signs with Reuben Doane. I want no more of it.'

Alas, when Angela recalled this judgment to Miss Penfold that misguided lady made answer: 'But Captain Doane fairly worships Stephen Fleming's memory. He talks of him by the hour. I have seen tears in his eyes when his name came up and I was lamenting that we so cruelly misunderstood his going away from us. Even the rescued sailors say that Captain Doane treated him most kindly during the voyage.'

It was Captain Chester Burdick who forced the issue. The stout-hearted old skipper was hoisted to the deck upon a mattress after a week of fuming below. His leg was mending slowly and he was still helpless, but he was resolved to demonstrate that he still commanded the Nautilus. Propped by pillows he made shift to take observations for the purpose of comparison with the mate's calculations of the position of the ship. Captain Doane volunteered to handle the sextant, but the portly, cherubic shipmaster of Stonehaven roared at him:

'You are a meddlesome, spying, interfering old nuisance, sir. I will thank you to mind your own business. You have been prowling and poking around this ship where you didn't belong. You have been asking too many questions of my mates and my men. You have given orders on my quarterdeck. I picked you up adrift and saved your life, and you will do as I tell you or you'll mess furrud with the hands after this. You let my sextant alone.'

From the waist came the boyish cheer of Arthur and Dick Mott, who rejoiced that the 'hoodoo' had been defied. Angela clasped her hands nervously and turned to look at her aunt, who was pink with indignation as she cried, all in a flutter: 'I am the owner of this vessel, Captain Burdick, and my guests are to be treated with courtesy. It is my command.'

'And I am master of this vessel, Miss Hester Penfold, even though I have a busted spar,' he trumpeted, not a whit abashed. 'I am responsible for the safety of every soul on board, and until I am deposed, in port, mind you, not at sea, I'll stand no doggoned nonsense. This man has given me cause to lose my temper and I propose to lose it just as much as I please. I'm not afraid of him. He can't bamboozle *me*.'

Captain Doane stood very erect and said nothing, but his corded hands opened and closed, and his blue eyes glittered frostily.

Puffing like a grampus, Captain Burdick hastened to forestall interruption and freed his mind in a final explosion: 'You needn't glare at me. I suppose you looked that way at the sailors you used to manhandle. Shot 'em off the yards, I've heard.'

With a pitying, patronizing nod, Captain Doane strode grandly from the scene, a man misunderstood and maligned.

Miss Penfold was not far from hysteria as she implored her belligerent skipper: 'Please, oh, please, Captain Burdick, calm yourself and have some regard for my feelings. What can be the matter with you?'

'Matter enough,' was the unshaken response. 'Here I have been fretting myself to a frazzle down below, and you have spent all your time mooning around on deck with that sanctimonious old goat. I am talking rough, and may the

Lord forgive me, but I just have to do it. That old scoundrel isn't fit company for the ship's cook.'

Harassed and completely cowed by the amazing rebellion of this mild-mannered old shipmaster, Miss Penfold sought refuge in flight to her stateroom. She had been publicly defied. It was rank mutiny, nothing less, nor for the life of her could she recollect a similar episode in the family logbooks. Captain Burdick, still steaming at high pressure, roundly berated his mate for knuckling under to Reuben Doane, and, having set his house in order, he lay on his back and smoked his pipe and swore at his useless leg. To him came Captain Andrew Claghorn, convoyed by a sailor at each elbow, for he was still a groaning victim of 'rheumatics.'

Painfully lowering himself to the mattress, he doubled himself thereon and was thus greeted by his comrade in misery: 'Well, Andrew, we're both ready for the junk-heap. Ought to have stayed ashore, both of us. Too old to go romancin' around. I cleared my mind just now.' He jerked an eloquent thumb in the direction of Reuben Doane, who was statuesquely posed at the mizzen shrouds. 'Same old trouble, Andrew. She was always unsuspectin' of seafarin' men. There was you and me, she doted on us, and there was poor young Fleming, she went crazy over him, and up to that point her luck kept her from being fooled. But this old rip —'

'I hope you scolded her,' growled Captain Andrew. 'I heard a few echoes through the skylight.'

'I was outspoken,' beamed the other. 'And she is madder than a wet hen. What worries me is, how are things going to work out after we get to Capetown? You're no good, Andrew. You'll have to quit the ship. And while I wouldn't say it loud, I'm not sure my leg is just right. I may have to have it overhauled by the hospital sawbones.

The idea of leaving Miss Hester to the tender mercies of this Reuben Doane distracts me plumb bald-headed.'

'Send a cable message to Stonehaven and have a guardian or two appointed,' suggested Captain Andrew.

''Twon't do a mite of good. She's always been her own boss, and all Stonehaven knows it can't budge her when she is once sot.'

Meanwhile, the clean, strong winds were blowing the Nautilus bravely on her course, and the seamen were going briskly about their tasks, notwithstanding the warring interests on the quarterdeck. Even Miss Penfold was moved to forget her tribulations when at length the ship actually made her landfall and stood in close-hauled with a southerly wind, to enter Table Bay. Thus had the old Penfold shipmasters sighted this outpost of the mysterious Orient. Soon the misty outline of Table Mountain loomed in the distant background, its dark slopes draped with fleecy clouds, the adjoining heights of Devil's Peak and Lion's Head lifting like guardian ramparts behind the port of Capetown at the head of the spacious bay. Nearer view disclosed the suburban settlements fringing the water — Rondebosch, Wynburg, Constantia, brightly checkered with gardens and villas, lovely for luxuriance of foliage. The Nautilus swept in toward the long arm of the breakwater and found an anchorage among the clustered shipping. These craft, viewed as a colorful marine picture, were foreign, exotic, picturesque. They kindled Miss Penfold's imagination, with suggestion of the far Eastern ports of the Indian Ocean, of the Gold Coast and Zanzibar, of the spicy languorous harbors of the Straits Settlements and the jeweled islands of warm sapphire seas.

Dutch, English, French, and German were the colors displayed, but the Nautilus alone flew the Stars and Stripes among all these masts and spars and funnels. Her brass

guns boomed a saluting salvo as if she were a man-of-war, and the Penfold house-flag rippled proudly aloft to tell all beholders that a Stonehaven East-Indiaman had come to call. Miss Penfold was impatient to land, but was compelled to await the fussy formalities of inspection that a ship must undergo. Then, regardless of their recent clashes of opinion, she invited Angela to go with her, and Ogden Haight accompanied them by virtue of necessity, for much business must be dispatched at once.

Captain Reuben Doane was about to enter the boat when Captain Burdick, who sat in a chair, his 'busted spar' poked straight in front of him, like a bowsprit, sung out: 'You will go ashore with your men. You just stay where you are.'

The castaway looked for a moment more like a satyr than a patriarch before he was able to resume the mask of benignity he had lately worn. Fickle Miss Penfold, absorbed in the pleasures of anticipation, cast no backward glance of compassion. Soon she found herself in the streets of a solidly built and modern city, not in the least like that primitive Crown Colony wrested from the Dutch, which had been visited by Captain John Penfold as a pioneer voyager from an infant republic of the new world. She found some things to remind her of the ancient days, however — the obsolete castle, the Dutch dwellings of brick faced with stucco, their flat roofs and cornices and raised 'stoeps' suggesting transplanted bits of Holland, and the street crowds in which were picturesquely jumbled Boers, Hottentots, Kaffirs, Malays, and English.

'I ought to have known better,' said Miss Hester, 'but I hardly expected to find so much twentieth-century civilization. We are almost as much of an anachronism as we were in Stonehaven. However, this is not our destination.'

'The shop windows look as if the traveling salesmen in

the mail-steamers had supplied every want,' Angela observed. 'I fancy our plans for trading with the natives would be considered somewhat out of date.'

'That is up to me,' put in Ogden Haight, 'though I didn't count on having to take a suitcase full of samples and chase from store to store in hot competition with Yankee and German drummers. However, give me time to get my bearings. If we can turn an honest dollar in Capetown, far be it from me to play the laggard.'

'Let us find the bank at once and read our mail from home,' advised Miss Penfold. 'Tremendous things may have happened in Stonehaven since we left there ages and ages ago.'

'Nothing has happened in Stonehaven in a hundred years except the departure of the Nautilus,' said Angela, with a smile.

They moved at a faster gait, however, and at the offices of the British-African Banking Company, Limited, were delighted to find a great heap of letters, magazines, newspapers, and, more important than all else, several cablegrams addressed to Miss Penfold. She fingered the envelopes uncertainly, with a feminine fear of tidings.

'I brought the code books in case of need,' Haight spoke up. 'May I help you?'

She silently gave him the messages and he ripped open the uppermost to find this uncouth string of words:

PLYMOUTH PRECIPICE HORIZON PULCHRITUDE ORIOLE MEMORABILIA PENFOLD ALCAZAR BEATIFICATION

TREYMORE

Miss Penfold had taken alarm at the first word. '*Plymouth*,' she exclaimed. 'That must mean the Plymouth Fidelity Trust Company of Boston, my trustees and bankers. And Mr. Treymore is my attorney. I am so foolish. It is probably nothing more than a report on some of my

investments. Several large mortgages were to be canceled this year. What does "*Precipice*" mean, Ogden?'

He rapidly thumbed the code book used by prearrangement with the lawyer. Consternation was written large in his face as he quoted slowly:

'"PRECIPICE — *in the hands of receivers.*"'

'Oh, how terrible! The Trust Company has absolute control of my estate, of all my investment securities' — and Miss Penfold put her handkerchief to her lips to stifle a sob. 'And what next?'

'"HORIZON,"' said Ogden in funereal accents, '"*believed to be hopelessly insolvent.*"' He fumbled the book awkwardly, anxious to finish the harrowing business as soon as possible. '"PULCHRITUDE" means "*officials have been arrested.*" Shall I go right on, Miss Hester? It seems to grow worse with every code word I unravel.'

'Yes, and please hurry as fast as you can,' quavered Miss Penfold.

'"PENFOLD ALCAZAR" is to say Penfold estate practically wiped out. "*Expected to be a total loss*" is the code phrase. The final word means that Mr. Treymore is awaiting instructions from you.'

The two women gazed blankly at each other, unable to realize the meaning of this shocking message.

Angela picked up the slip of paper, sadly regarded it, and said: 'Did you translate these two words, "ORIOLE" and "MEMORABILIA"?'

'By Jove! I was so rattled that I jumped over them,' exclaimed Haight. 'Wait a minute. Perhaps they may be the silver lining of the cloud. No, they are about what you might expect. Treymore advises you to realize on your floating assets as he calls them, and come home at once, Miss Hester. I suppose he means that you should sell the ship and abandon the voyage.'

The other cablegrams confirmed the first, with the additional news that the Penfold estate was the heaviest loser and that no more than five cents on the dollar would ultimately be saved from the wreck, and this only after long delay and litigation.

'It must have been a tremendous smash,' said Haight. 'Your fortune was mostly tied up in bonds and stocks, industrials and railroads, I think you told me once. If the failure is as rotten as appears, the Plymouth Fidelity may have been selling or pledging your securities for a long time. Pardon me, but if this is true, and I am afraid it is, what have you left, Miss Hester?'

'My house in Stonehaven and the Nautilus and her cargo,' she faltered. 'The Trust Company was trustee for my entire income, and I was considered a wealthy woman.'

'It is the worst shock in the financial history of Boston, but that is small comfort. The Plymouth Fidelity was an institution, like the State House or the Bunker Hill Monument.'

Angela was first to rally from the staggering impact of this intelligence. Her eyes were shining and undaunted, and never had she so vividly resembled the portraits of the old fighting Brecks and Penfolds as when she said: 'This is no longer a make-believe, dream voyage. It is the real thing. We have our ship and cargo and we are bound out to the East to win our fortune under the Penfold house-flag.'

Ogden Haight looked at her with adoration undisguised. If it had not been for that one fatal slip, he might have had a chance to win this splendid, courageous girl, to dare and to strive with her in a loyal partnership that should pluck victory from disaster. Her high-hearted words kindled his ambition like a spark in tinder, but the thought of Miss Penfold's welfare was like a dash of cold water, so grave was the crisis in her affairs, so much depended on the decision that must be made.

'You can count on me as long as I can be of any use to you,' he said very humbly. 'I suppose that the sanest thing to do is to take the lawyer's advice, yet this voyage has been so consistently insane from the beginning, in the eyes of most people, that I believe it should not be abandoned too hastily.'

'I do not know what to do or say. I don't know what to do,' murmured Miss Penfold, who had been absently scanning a Boston newspaper account of the collapse of the Plymouth Fidelity Trust Company. 'How can we continue our voyage? My captains are disabled, my fortune has been swept away, and my thirty thousand dollars in specie will no more than pay the expenses of taking the ship out to the Orient and home again. My drafts on Boston are worthless now.'

'Let us go back to the Nautilus and talk matters over,' suggested Angela.

Their boat was not waiting, for they had expected to spend most of the day ashore. A launch was hired at the landing-stage and, as it threaded a way clear of the shipping and turned toward her stately vessel, Miss Penfold began to weep. Not that she was unworthy, in this hour of blighting misfortune, of those gallant forbears whose memories she idolized, but she was no longer young and she could think of nothing else than the ruin that overshadowed this beloved argosy of hers.

Before the ship was reached, however, she dried her eyes and was the granddaughter of Captain Hosea Penfold as she exclaimed: 'I am ashamed of myself! If I am compelled to dispose of my ship and cargo for what they will bring, I shall return to Stonehaven and hold up my head precisely as I have always done. I am more distressed for you, Angela, than I am for myself.'

'Bless your dear heart, Arthur and I will work our fingers

off for you,' impetuously returned the niece. 'We have been two spoiled children of fortune all our lives.'

Ogden Haight longed to tell Angela that it made not the slightest difference to him that she was no longer an heiress, but he could only serve and wait and hope. If he had been more or less dazzled in the first place by the glitter of the Penfold fortune, his feelings had suffered a sea-change and he had become as chivalrous and true-hearted a lover as ever wooed and sighed in vain.

'If I had been as sure of it then as I am now,' he said to himself, 'I should never have deceived her about Stephen Fleming. A fellow has to pay the price, I suppose, and I have learned that a fellow can't live with himself if he doesn't play the game square with the one girl in the world, no matter what it may cost him.'

His own reflections were shoved into the background as they mounted the side of the ship. Miss Penfold immediately went aft to consult with Captain Burdick, Ogden and Angela dutifully following after as members of the ways and means committee.

The skipper listened attentively for several minutes, then gesticulated with great vehemence and burst out: 'I thought our luck was bound to turn when I saw the last of Captain Reuben Doane. I thanked my stars as soon as I sent him ashore. But he is a full-rigged Jonah and you can't lose him.'

'So the voyage is teetotally smashed into a cocked hat,' croaked Captain Andrew Claghorn, that chronic pessimist. 'I stood for it as long as it was just play, like a story-book, and Miss Penfold could afford the luxury. But I am dead set against aiding and abetting her to throw good money after bad.'

'But the Penfold fortune was made in just such voyages as this,' protested Miss Hester.

'And so it was, but you can't get it back this way,' sorrowfully affirmed Captain Burdick. 'Times have changed. We are out of date as real serious, money-makin' merchant traders.'

'What do you advise me to do?' asked Miss Penfold.

'If you have been wrecked by those infernal land pirates in Boston, and it is as bad as you make out, I say run no more risks. Turn the ship and cargo into cash right here at Capetown, and board the first mail-steamer for home. How about it, Andrew?'

'That is my final say-so, Chester, looking at it fore and aft and up and down. Supposing she does get stubborn and decide to push on to the eastward as she intended. Where can she find the right kind of a master? How is she going to pay her bills? How is she going to make her profits? I tell you the bottom is knocked out of the scheme. It's high and dry on the rocks.'

'But if we are willing to wait until you can take command again, Captain Burdick?' inquired Angela.

The skipper of the Nautilus doggedly shook his head. 'I can't countenance any such foolish, extravagant notions. No, I won't be responsible for squandering what means Miss Penfold has left.'

'I feel exactly the same way,' growled Captain Claghorn.

Miss Hester was not strong enough to brook such strenuous opposition and had no more to say. Angela walked away with Ogden Haight.

'Perhaps the captains are right. At any rate, they will snuff out the last spark of Aunt Hester's courage, I am afraid. I don't know what to think. You are our business manager. There is no one else to turn to, now. Shall we try to sell the Nautilus?'

'Not until I have looked the town over again, and can learn something about the business situation here.'

Just then Arthur Breck came dancing along with an air of wholly incongruous cheerfulness.

'Great stunt, this!' he cried. 'I am awfully sorry for Aunt Hester, but we will all pitch in and make our everlasting fortunes, won't we? I don't have to go back to college, and I can see the voyage through to the finish. We'll come sailing home with diamonds on. Dick has a great scheme — leave the women ashore and turn pirates with the Nautilus. He says he can pick up a bully crew of cut-throat sailor-men in Capetown, and we can make our ship the terror of the Indian Ocean. Up with the Jolly Roger! Out cutlasses and board!'

'Dick Mott and you will be hanged together if we do not separate you,' laughed Angela. 'You had better go ashore and walk off some of this surplus energy.'

'I have been waiting for Dick. He couldn't go without the old man's permission. We are all ready to hit the beach, and we promise to be as good as pie. Dick has to be back on board by sunset.'

'Come along with me, then,' said Haight. 'I am about to order a boat away.'

The conscientious captain's clerk was absent through the afternoon, and returned in a disheartened mood, although he tried to wear a cheerful front. Miss Penfold was waiting for him, her manner pathetically eager, as if she clung to him as a last straw.

'We seem to be a sort of joke in Capetown,' he reported. 'I was never taken very seriously anywhere, but, confound it, I have become a solid man of affairs and I expect to be treated as such. Times are frightfully dull here, that is the chief trouble. The merchants are overstocked, all kinds of goods a drug on the market, and even the lumber trade is as dead as a doornail. And I don't believe you could give cod-fish balls away on a silver platter, to say nothing of

sewing-machines, typewriters, phonographs, and canned goods. I couldn't place a respectable order for anything. If we decide to sell out, an auction sale is the only hope of moving the cargo for cash, and that means fairly throwing it away.'

'What if we up anchor and sail for home and sell our cargo there?' suggested Angela.

'I presume you have had no heart to read the home newspapers very thoroughly. A frightful panic has swept the United States like a cyclone. The Plymouth Fidelity smash was only one of many big bank failures. Business is paralyzed, mills shutting down everywhere, no real money in sight, and we couldn't give our freight away.'

'The Nautilus is as good as new. She must be worth a large sum,' persisted Angela, anxious to thresh over the whole matter, while Miss Penfold looked as if she had heard her own death sentence.

'The Nautilus is what Billy Truelove calls a "dead card"' — and Haight smiled ruefully. 'Wooden square-riggers are obsolete. Nobody wants to buy them except for a beggarly amount to cut them down as coal barges. This ship is too small, besides, to be handled profitably on charter. Why, there are several big steel ships, English and German, laid up here now, rusting at their moorings, unable to get freight of any kind. The Nautilus is unsalable here, and at home she would fetch no more than a song, no more than a trifling percentage of the money you spent in rebuilding and refitting her.'

'And has this cloud no silver lining whatever?' Miss Penfold asked beseechingly.

'Only the specie, if you wish me to be literal. And that is your cash reserve. It will take some of it to pay the wages and stores accounts already due.'

A blanket of silence fell upon the trio, lifted at length by

the voice of Captain Burdick, who hobbled past on his crutches and pensively observed: 'For a copper-riveted, industrious, full-powered hoodoo, commend me to Reuben Doane. Well, what is the latest news?'

'We appear to be holding funeral services,' sighed Angela.

'Oh, fudge!' exclaimed a hearty young voice as Arthur scampered up the poop-ladder and joined the group beneath the awning. 'I thought you were the only thoroughbred sport of the lot, sis. Why, I was sure you would insist on going straight ahead as if nothing had happened. Dick and I have looked the proposition over very carefully and we have concluded that all this talk about hauling down our colors is absolutely impossible. If you haven't the sand to turn pirates, we must push on and find natives to trade with, the genuine chocolate drops that live far, far from electric lights and telephones.'

'What did you discover ashore to make you so cock-sure?' asked his sister.

'We discovered Captain Reuben Doane for one thing, and he gave us the scare of our lives. Dick left me to go sleuthing on his trail. I'm afraid he won't be aboard before morning.'

'That white-whiskered Jonah again,' lamented Captain Burdick. 'Picking him up adrift was the worst day's work I ever did at sea. Didn't I tell you we hadn't heard the last of him? As for Dick Mott, I'll put him on bread and water for overstaying his leave.'

'But what did Captain Doane do to you?'

'Why is Dick following him?'

'What in the world has happened?'

Assaulted by questions from all sides, Arthur was ready with his answers:

'We ran across him in the toughest quarter of the town. Dick wanted to explore a bit, said he was anxious to look

over the sailors' boarding-house district with a professional eye, and that sort of thing. Reuben Doane must have been steering his men into lodgings. Anyhow, he jumped out of a doorway, grabbed Dick by the back of the neck, and nearly twisted his head off, but he kicked himself loose, and, say, did we burn the wind getting away from there!'

Arthur glanced at his aunt as if afraid she might box his ears, but added with lofty impertinence: 'Sorry to slander your gentleman friend, but he has a temper, Aunt Hester. He blackguarded Dick for telling tales about him aboard our ship, and threatened to kill him if he didn't own up to you that he had been a lying, mischief-making little devil. If Dick hadn't been such a rough-and-tumble scrapper, he never could have broken away.'

'And what did Dick do then?'

'Oh, he was peevish and told me to come out to the ship and leave him to chart his own course. He has a notion that Doane is up to some sort of crooked game that has to do with the Nautilus and he intends to find out what it is.'

Meanwhile that battered young man of the world, Richard Mott, was rambling fearlessly among the haunts of sailor-men from all the world, and feeling very much at home. He scraped acquaintance with low-browed idlers who would have knocked him on the head for a bottle of rum, and laughed at the efforts of a boarding-house runner to lure him aboard a German bark bound to the Argentine. Seemingly careless, he was picking up bits of information here and there and, without dogging the footsteps of Captain Doane, he was able to keep in touch with his movements and those with whom he talked. The hour was near midnight when Dick became convinced that his excursion was well worth while. The master of the Ticonderoga had not gone to a reputable hotel for the night after dispatching his business, but was in the back room of a

drinking-place down by the water-front in company with a florid, grizzled man of middle age known in that neighborhood as Captain Matt Weaver.

Dick had seen them together earlier in the evening, and he did not like the appearance or the swagger of Captain Weaver. Shrewd inquiries had informed him that this friend of Reuben Doane was a broken shipmaster of shady reputation who had been unable to get a ship and was 'on the beach' in the phrase of the Eastern ports. Dick cooled his heels outside the door of the public-house, or dodged past the curtained window of the little back room, and fought down his impatience for two hours on end. When at length Captain Doane strode into the street, Dick was hidden in the shadowy mouth of an alley near by, and for all his pains he heard no more than the fragment of speech:

'That's settled. I'll take you aboard and introduce you to-morrow, Matt.'

Dick scuttled away to find lodgings until daylight, muttering to himself: 'They're old pals. Perhaps they sailed together. "Take you aboard, Matt." That means aboard the Nautilus.'

Early next day he aroused Miss Penfold's little company from contemplation of their woes. In fact, he made them feel curiously chagrined, as if they were playing laggard, faint-hearted parts. This waif, bound to their interests by no tangible ties, had been courting danger, safeguarding them while they slept.

'He is always on the job!' admiringly exclaimed Arthur. 'Hello, Dick, tell us all about it. Did you lift Reuben Doane's scalp?'

'I know more than I did,' answered the other. 'He's bought passage in the next mail-boat to London, and is booked through to New York. But that don't mean we're rid of him. He picked up a chum last night, a red-faced,

chesty party, big mustache, big voice, that queered himself runnin' guns into the Philippines, or smuggling opium, or some other game that lost his papers for him. Say, they're two of a kind, this Captain Matt Weaver and Grandfather Rube.'

Dick coughed, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and made a funny little apologetic bow to the ladies before he resumed: 'I mean to be polite, all right, beggin' your pardon, but this outfit makes me tired. It's all balled up with fog and moonshine. You don't keep your eyes open. You expect everybody to be as nice and genteel and honest as you are. Reuben Doane has to go to New York, but he don't propose to lose sight of you easy marks. He don't know that Miss Penfold has gone broke, and he expects you to proceed on your voyage after finding a master that is wise to tradin' and navigatin' out East.'

'And so he will try to persuade Aunt Hester to take this Captain Weaver?' Angela broke in to say.

'You are the bright party, Miss Breck. Why, study it out for yourself. Here's all this talk about a fortune in specie aboard; real hard, minted money. It's like taking candy from a child. The sailors have gabbled about it till the word has gone round that there's a hundred thousand dollars' worth of it. Don't you suppose old man Doane was workin' his wits overtime to find some way of breakin' into this combination? This beach-comber, Captain Weaver, takes command on Doane's recommendation, and this Weaver person puts the Nautilus ashore on one of those Malay islands — accidental, of course. He saves his passengers and crew, maybe, but he robs the ship. And him and Reuben Doane split up the loot between 'em.'

'I cannot believe a word of it. It is only another chapter of this nightmare,' murmured Miss Penfold. 'Men are not so wicked as all that.'

'Bet you anything you like that Reuben fetches Weaver aboard to-day and introduces him as a capable and trusty shipmaster,' rejoined Dick. 'This proposition of yours has more kinks in it than you ever read about in your grand-daddy's logbooks.'

CHAPTER IX

A PHANTOM SHIP

As soon as arrangements could be made, Captain Chester Burdick and Captain Andrew Claghorn were removed to a Capetown hospital, as luckless a brace of deep-water skippers as ever sailed out of Stonehaven. Taking stock of their mutual sorrows, they found no balm in Gilead. Although bowled over in the line of duty, they had gained no glory thereby. Nothing was left for them but to go home and face a scoffing chorus of 'I told you so's.' The first mate of the Nautilus had come ashore to consult with them, and, because he was a young man of Marblehead who had married into the Burdick family, the skipper wagged a dubious head and harangued him thus:

'I am sort of responsible for you, James Ellsworth, and you must pay strict attention to my words. Miss Penfold hates to quit, and I don't blame her, but it's plain foolishness for her to hold the notion of this voyage in her head one minute longer. The others are eggin' her on. Miss Angela is pesterin' her to make for Batavia, same as was originally planned, but the girl is awful young and featherheaded and knows no better. As for Haight, he'd better go home and play golf. Hester Penfold is the finest, crankiest woman in our town, and I propose to act for her best interests. She and that ship of hers must part company before she is busted, smashed, cleaned out, hook, line, and sinker.'

'Goin' to chloroform her?' queried Captain Claghorn.

'No, by Judas! James Ellsworth, I order you to resign your berth.' Captain Burdick aimed a pudgy forefinger at the rosy-cheeked mate. 'I put you in the Nautilus and I am

goin' to take you out of her. You are goin' home with me and Captain Andrew. I dunno but what I ought to order the whole crew out on strike. Without a master or mate, Miss Penfold will have to say good-bye to the condemned old packet, won't she?'

The mate was flustered and awkwardly protested: 'It seems kind of low-down —'

'Not a bit of it, James Ellsworth. Force her to sell the ship right here, and we can take her along in the same steamer with us and see her safe home with no chance to throw away what money she has left.'

'Very well, sir. I'll do as you say. You are my boss,' said the mate. 'I must stay in charge until the crew is paid off and discharged and the ship tied up.'

While this well-meant mutiny was gathering headway, a boat approached the gangway of the Nautilus with two passengers in the stern-sheets. One was tall, rugged, and white-bearded, the other of stouter build, high-colored, with a ruffling, confident manner. Captain Doane had chosen an advantageous hour for visiting the ship. In the absence of Captain Burdick and the first mate, the party was strategically weak.

'Shall I tell the second mate to order him to sheer off?' exclaimed Arthur. 'We don't want him to come on board.'

'I — I — it seems hardly courteous. He can do no harm. I am curious to hear what he has to say,' stammered Miss Penfold.

While the others waited upon her decision, Captain Reuben Doane mounted nimbly to the quarterdeck with his hat in his hand.

'I wish to say fare you well and God-speed, before I go to sea, homeward-bound, as a passenger in the mail-steamer yonder.' Glancing over his shoulder, and per-

ceiving that his less active companion was close at hand, he went on to say: 'I want you to meet my old friend, Captain Matthew Weaver, like myself an American ship-master of the old school. He can spin you yarns that make my own sound tame.'

Captain Weaver bobbed clumsily, twisted the ends of his gray mustache, and jocularly observed: 'Captain Doane and I happen to be in the same boat. A master without a vessel is a sad kind of a sight, like a fish out of water. But we all have our ups and downs. A fine, smart ship you have, madam.'

A chilly dumbness had smitten the listeners, all of whom were thinking of the prophecy of Dick Mott.

'Knowing that the Nautilus is left without a master,' went on Captain Doane, 'I took the liberty of bringing you in touch with Captain Weaver. If my word is worth anything to you, you may put him down as the very man — in fact, one man in a thousand to make your voyage successful. He will be glad to show you his papers.'

'Forged papers, most likely!' cried Arthur Breck, bristling defiance as the man of the family, and flinging prudence to the winds.

'You impertinent young whelp!' shouted Captain Matthew Weaver, and even the suave dignity of Reuben Doane was not proof against this assault from an unexpected quarter. There were no more angry words, however, no danger of chastisement, for from the bow of the ship rang the loud, excited call: 'Sail ho. And for the love of God, what kind of a ship is that?'

Every one on deck spun round to gaze seaward. Creeping in from the pathless Atlantic, unnoticed until now, was what had once been a large, full-rigged ship, now no more than a tragic caricature. Aloft she was a wreck. Not only were spars and yards missing, but those still standing were

festooned with streamers and ribbons of sail that had been blown to tatters. Ropes hung in knotted tangles, everything was askew, forlorn, incredibly chaotic. A couple of headsails, the lower foretopsail in the main course, and the spanker clumsily reefed had survived the general destruction and gave the vessel steerageway with the prevailing southerly breeze. The decks had been swept clear of boats, houses, everything, and the splintered timbers were heaped as they had lodged against the broken bulwarks. The black hull, streaked with salt and rust, rode so deep that even in this sheltered water the foaming seas frothed almost level with the deck.

It seemed preposterous that this ship should be making port under her own sail with men on board willing to risk their lives in her.

Captain Reuben Doane was first to guess the truth. Never a word said he as he stood and stared, his face working, his fingers in his beard. Suddenly he flung both arms above his head, gasped with a wheezing sound as if he were strangling, and dropped heavily into a chair as if his legs had crumpled under him. No one heeded him, except Angela Breck, who drew her skirts aside to avoid touching him.

They stood still and silent, until the wild shout of Dick Mott came aft: 'The Ticonderoga, so help me!'

Who had found her and dared to try to bring her to port? No other ship could have manned her with a salvage crew, else her sails would not have been suffered to blow away, nor would there be such fearful disorder aloft. She seemed like a phantom ship, and the beholders strained their eyes to discern the men who sailed her at peril of their lives.

Arthur Breck had found a pair of glasses and presently he exclaimed in a frightened voice: 'One—two—three men on deck, no more. Three men, or three spooks.'

The resurrected Ticonderoga drew nearer very slowly, nor signaled for a tug. When almost abreast of the Nautilus, two of the ragged, shaggy men ran forward, tugged and hauled at block and falls, led a rope to the capstan, and painfully released an anchor which presently splashed into the harbor while the chain roared through the hawse-hole. With a great clatter and groaning of her disheveled rigging, the ship swung into the wind, and the three men, standing close together on the poop, raised a cheer which came across the water faint and clear and jubilant.

Captain Reuben Doane had revived to the extent of getting on his feet and moving unsteadily to the rail, where he swayed, talking to himself. He beheld a scuttled ship with the damning auger-holes bored through her planking, and no less vividly a prison for her master who had done the deed, prison for all the years of life that remained for him. He had become shrunken and wrinkled and aged. Guilt and fear were written so large upon his features that the others moved away from him, although they knew not why, as if a leper had come among them.

He had wholly forgotten his friend Captain Matthew Weaver, who, surmising that things had suddenly gone very wrong, indeed, was unostentatiously retreating to the boat alongside. Captain Doane looked about him for a helping hand, but no one offered to assist him to the boat. Clutching the poop-ladder round by round, he let himself down with stumbling carefulness, crept in the same fashion down the gangway, and Captain Weaver hauled him into the boat, dumping him down in the stern-sheets like a bundle of old clothes.

They were still within earshot of the Nautilus when Arthur Breck, who had dived below to find the ship's powerful spy-glass, yelled from the rigging: 'Oh, Dick Mott. Come here and look! You have the sharpest eyes on

board. Maybe you have seen those men ashore somewhere.'

No sooner had Dick Mott poised the long barrel upon his crooked elbow than he fairly shrieked: 'They're ghosts, every one of 'em. It's a haunted ship. We're all dead and done for.'

'My goodness gracious, is it as bad as that?' groaned Arthur, who was as white as any sheet. 'Buck up, Dick. Name them and you can have them!'

Dick's teeth were chattering, and his eyes as big as onions, as he wailed in reply: 'I know 'em all. There's "Bucko" McCann, the second mate, and little Williams, the Englishman. They abandoned the ship weeks and weeks ago in the other boats. And — and — lemme look again if I've got the nerve. Strike me d-dead, but it's M-Mister Stephen F-Fleming, and he was d-drownded before this g-ghost ship went to the b-bottom!'

With this Dick leaped for the deck, bolted for the forecastle like a rabbit, took the scuttle head-first, and was seen no more. Determined to defend the family, even against phantoms, Arthur ran to his sister and his aunt, glancing overside at the boat containing Captain Reuben Doane, for the stricken shipmaster was no longer silent. The tidings shouted by Dick Mott had shattered his lethargy. He was foaming and cursing, shaking his fist at the Ticonderoga, almost falling overboard until Captain Weaver pulled him down and held him fast. He comprehended that in some inscrutable fashion, the elaborate structure of his villainy had been annihilated, that he had been outwitted and outfought from start to finish, and he thought only of flight.

Angela Breck was trying to hold the spy-glass in her trembling hands and mechanically saying over and over: 'I can't believe it. I can't believe it. It is not true. It is not true. I know he is dead.'

'The liveliest corpse that ever trod a deck,' cried Arthur. 'Look at him scramble into the rigging yonder. That instinct of yours was the real thing, sis.'

From the shattered top-hamper of the Ticonderoga flashed a string of bright signal flags, and Ogden Haight, as a sort of official interpreter, dashed after the international code book.

'It is our code number at the top,' said he. 'The message is, "*Nautilus, are all well on board?*"'

'Of course he would know our ship as far as he could see her,' dreamily observed Miss Penfold, who was in a trance state compounded of emotions innumerable. 'Answer him, Ogden, and ask if Stephen Fleming is really alive.'

The signal bunting fluttered the query and another gay parade of flags climbed aloft on the Ticonderoga.

'*Fleming, acting master, sends greetings. Will visit you as soon as possible.*'

Angela Breck smiled at the broken, sea-worn ship. The wonder was that she did not wonder more. It was a miracle, to be accepted by faith alone. Stephen Fleming had somehow made the unbelievable come true, and had come sailing straight to her. At length the Ticonderoga signaled: '*Send a boat. We have none.*'

A little later the boat came creeping back over the burnished bay and three passengers climbed aboard. Ragamuffins they were, blistered, grimy, and haggard, yet bright-eyed withal, and they moved with springy alertness. First on deck was Stephen Fleming, and the Yankee sailors cheered thunderously. Dick Mott and Arthur had been hovering about the old brass six-pounders and now this sea-armament barked a sulfurous greeting. Fleming waved his cap at the men, and hastened to the quarter-deck. There were dark shadows under his eyes, and he was trained as lean and fine as a greyhound, but his smile was

as confident and boyish as of yore and his physical vigor seemed unabated.

He saw only Angela and stepped quickly toward her with hand outstretched. A curious constraint suddenly enthralled her, the inevitable constraint of convention and feminine fear lest she might reveal too much. Nor could she think of aught else to say, sweetly, cordially, but inanely: 'How do you do, Stephen Fleming? You don't know how glad we are to see you.'

'Not half so glad as I am to see you. Did you — did you have a pleasant voyage?'

'Very poor actors,' murmured Arthur Breck in a disgusted aside to Miss Penfold. 'A chance for a great scene, and it fell absolutely flat. Can't you do better than that?'

She could, indeed, and straightway she stood on tiptoe to slip her arm around Fleming's neck and kissed him on both cheeks.

'God bless you, that is more like it!' was his ingenuous exclamation, which made him blush as he perceived its significance. 'And here we all are, Miss Penfold, safe on board the blessed old Nautilus, although it was a long way around.'

'And for ever so long we believed that you had run away and forsaken us,' Miss Penfold began to explain.

Hurt and indignant, he let her get no farther. 'You believed I had deserted you of my own accord? You had no faith in me?'

'We were forced to think it, for a while, but we know better now —' she stumblingly confessed, regretting her tactless admission and eager to set matters right.

'And why are you not dead?' demanded Arthur. 'And how did you come to life again? Good Heavens! you don't even know that you are dead, do you?'

'So you are the lad who landed me in all the trouble,' was

the genial reply. 'What do you mean by telling me to my face that I am dead? Has the Ticonderoga been heard from ahead of us? Were any of her people brought into this port?'

'Why, we picked up Captain Doane and the men that were left alive in his boat,' Arthur explained. 'And we landed them here. He was on board to-day, when your ship came in. It didn't seem to please him a whole lot and he had several kinds of fits. Then you couldn't see him for dust.'

Fleming was too bewildered to comment and his eager informant babbled on: 'How is that for a surprise party? Aunt Hester got awfully chummy with him. She can tell you all about the old sport. As the real thing in a rip-roaring, grandstand shipmaster, he held the center of the stage.'

Dumb as a wooden man stood Fleming, but wrath and bitterness surged in his heart. He could not understand. His dear friends of Stonehaven must have thrown him over. First they had not believed in him and now his mortal enemy was said to be a friend of Miss Penfold. 'Chummy' with Reuben Doane, the man who had tried to murder him in cold blood?

Perceiving that a storm was imminent, Miss Penfold gently exhorted: 'Do not be so hasty to misunderstand. You are not like yourself. Captain Doane spoke very beautifully of you, and sincerely mourned your loss. The others suspected and disliked him. I alone am blameworthy for being courteous to him in his distress and misfortune.'

'Captain Burdick should have hanged him at your yardarm!' exclaimed Fleming. 'He killed me, or thinks he did, because I knew that he meant to lose his ship for the insurance money. Thanks to Williams and McCann, I hoodwinked him, and hid below and saw him scuttle the

Ticonderoga. These two faithful friends of mine stood by me, and we stayed behind when she was abandoned, and we plugged the leaks, and swore we'd fetch port in her, tho' she was sinking under our feet. And we pumped until we dropped in our tracks, and slept and turned to and pumped again. And we weathered blow after blow that ought to have sent us to the bottom. We won, by the grace of God, and now I hear that you treated Reuben Doane as a friend and guest!'

There was no stemming this fiery tide of denunciation, passionate, illogical, blinded, and Arthur whispered to Angela, who looked frightened and perplexed: 'Let him cool off. He will have to sleep a week before he's fit to figure things out. This set of complications is enough to put him in a padded cell.'

'We just pumped and steered and what sail we couldn't handle, we let blow to the divil,' amiably put in McCann by way of diversion.

'Mister Fleming was skipper and McCann was mate an' I was the whole bally crew,' chirruped Williams. 'You'd ha' died lawfin' to see me standin' watch and watch with meself. It was a comical voyage.'

Miss Penfold was in no mood to read the significance of these commonplace, prosaic words in which McCann and Williams dismissed their superb achievement. Thus it was that her ancestors had recorded the large and thrilling deeds which they viewed as no more than incidents of the days' work. These unknown, humble sailor-men slouching awkwardly on the deck of the Nautilus had lived an epic only to recall it in much the same way as Captain Jonathan Breck had set down in his logbook that magnificently concise entry:

After being out fourteen days, we were taken by a French privateer, and myself and a boy were put aboard the privateer.

After being ten days in this captivity, I with two other prisoners and two boys concerted a plan to take possession of the privateer in which we happily succeeded and stood for Jamaica.

Fleming turned to his scarecrow companions. 'Come along, boys. We have no end of things to do. You will have to return to the ship and stand watch while I go ashore and report. Then I will see that you are made comfortable in the best hotel in the town. The Nautilus will lend you some hands to help tidy up and keep curious folks from swarming aboard. Where is Captain Burdick, by the way?'

'Ashore in hospital, and Captain Claghorn also,' timidly answered Miss Penfold. 'We have no captain. Oh, there is so much to tell you, and you will not even listen —'

'I will come back and hear it all and put myself at your service just as soon as I can get my own ship off my hands,' said he, ashamed of his rudeness. 'Now I must find Captain Reuben Doane. He has the start of me, and I can't let him get away.'

With hasty farewells Fleming bolted for the side of the ship, halted to speak to the second mate and hustle a squad of Nautilus men into the boat, and was rowed toward the Ticonderoga.

Dick Mott, an impetuous volunteer, spoke up as he swung to his oar: 'Howdy, Mister Fleming? Did your head mend all right? I was sure sorry I done it.'

'Why, hello, Dick, what are you doing here? Were you shanghaied this time?'

'No. Stowed away. Say, talk about your pipe-dreams! This voyage has been the limit, and then some more. I want to go ashore with you. You need me in your business. I've been rubberin' on the track of Cap'n Reuben Doane and I know where to look for him. Him and a crooked pal named Weaver was framin' up a deal to get

hold of the Nautilus when you came ghost-dancin' in from sea and made 'em jump for cover.'

'All right, Dick. Trust you to know where to find the seafaring blackguards in any port. I don't know where I stand and your yarn may untie some of the hard knots.'

As soon as opportunity served, Dick launched his moving narrative of the ill-starred course of the Penfold adventure, omitting, with wisdom beyond his years, all mention of the perfidy of Ogden Haight. Trouble enough was in the air, thought he, and Fleming's temper was already on edge. A clash between these two men would make matters worse, besides which Dick had begun to have a sneaking fondness for Haight, who was so pluckily striving to atone for his sins. If the truth should transpire, the ship would not be large enough to hold both men, or so Dick surmised, and he was for letting this delicate situation work itself out without his meddling.

When he told Fleming of the loss of the Penfold fortune the sailor's indignation at his fancied ill-treatment vanished in a twinkling. He was most heartily ashamed of himself and felt great commiseration for Miss Penfold's pitiful plight. Angela Breck might treat him as shabbily as she liked, but his plain duty was to assist, and if possible succor, that gracious, white-haired lady whom he had led to undertake this disastrous voyage. His responsibility was undeniable, and more than this he was bound to her interest by ties of kinship, gratitude, and affection.

'About this Cap'n Reuben Doane person,' said Dick, 'is there really goin' to be a gunplay? Are you out to kill him for the things he did to you? I don't want to butt in, understand, but why not let the police give him his, and you steer clear so you can stand by the Nautilus bunch? We're down and out, any way you look at it — no more show of breakin' even than a drunken sailor in West Street.

It's up to you to pull this here romantical, rheumatical, nonsensical voyage off the rocks.'

'The Ticonderoga must come first, Dick. No, I thought for a while that I should shoot Reuben Doane on sight. But let him rot in jail where he belongs. I want to keep my record clean. He is caught red-handed. There never was a more complete show of evidence. And he won't live long enough to serve out his sentence.'

In Capetown Fleming first went to the office of the underwriters' agent and briefly reported the almost incredible facts. The elderly Englishman who listened to him was so amazed that he ejaculated at regular intervals, like minute guns: 'My word, but how can a man believe it?'

'We don't have to tell you a word,' said Fleming. 'We will make all the affidavits you like, as a matter of form, but the ship and her cargo speak for themselves. She is anchored in the roadstead, but, as you and I are sitting here, it was never intended that she should reach port. Come and see the auger-holes for yourself, and overhaul some of the bogus merchandise in her hold.'

'Oh, I sent a man off to her an hour ago, my dear sir, and I am waiting for his report. God bless me, I must go with you and inspect her myself. In default of agents, consignees, or master, the underwriters will, of course, take charge of her. This is prodigious, Mister — er — I beg your pardon, Captain Fleming. I suppose you know that you and your two shipmates will come in for a handsome bit of salvage. The ship was abandoned at sea. You brought a derelict into port.

'I shall be pleased to go with you to the office of the American Consul-General,' continued the agent. 'He will be anxious to coöperate with us, of course, and the Capetown police authorities must be notified at once. This Captain Doane must be run to earth. So he actually saw

his ship in the stream with you on board! What a tremendously dramatic situation! He is a very great scoundrel.'

'Look for Captain Matt Weaver,' suggested Dick Mott, who had been fidgeting in the background. 'Ten to one he will fix up a getaway for Cap'n Doane.'

'Birds of a feather,' said the Englishman. 'I hope we may bag them both. I have been trying to put Weaver behind the bars for the last five years, but he is a smooth and slippery rascal. There was the affair of the Morning Light steamer. He purposely beached her. I am morally certain of it but — tut, tut, this is no time for gossip. Let us get under way.'

The American Consul-General was found to be a sharp-visaged, angular, hustling gentleman from Iowa, with whom to think was to act as the trigger speeds the bullet. By nightfall he had visited the Ticonderoga, squinted at the auger-holes, slapped Fleming on the back as a 'true-blue Yankee,' and set the Capetown police in full hue and cry after Captain Reuben Doane. He found time also to bombard his State Department with cable messages asking that the American agents and owners be placed under strict surveillance.

'I blush for my countrymen!' he exclaimed vehemently. 'To think that this Doane and his infernal accomplices hatched this crime beneath the Stars and Stripes. We'll hang his hide on a fence, never you fear. And you and your comrades, McCann and Williams, will go home to appear against the criminals in Uncle Sam's court.'

'McCann and Williams will go at once,' replied Fleming. 'The case is ironclad without me, however, and conviction is certain. I may be delayed. The people in the Nautilus are dear friends of mine and they may need me. Let the owners and the underwriters thresh out the question of

taking the Ticonderoga back to New York. I'm done with her. A lawyer can handle my salvage claim.'

The Consul-General rubbed his sandy thatch and meditatively rejoined: 'That Miss Breck is a remarkably handsome and charming girl. I had the pleasure of meeting her yesterday. Yes, I presume that your deposition will answer, and, at any rate, I can't compel you to hurry home as a witness. It will give me a great deal of pleasure if you will dine with me to-night.'

Fleming colored, thanked the friendly diplomat, and excused himself on the plea of anxiety to take part in the chase after Captain Doane. With Dick Mott trotting beside him, he ransacked the water-front after learning that the police were still empty-handed. Before morning, however, it was reported to him from headquarters that the fugitive had been seen to embark in a small boat with Captain Matt Weaver shortly after midnight.

'Every vessel in harbor will be searched, of course,' grumbled Fleming, 'but he has some crafty scheme in his old noddle. We must find out more about this Matt Weaver, Dick. He is helping Doane to get away. But he can't play hide-and-seek for long. The old man will be marked and run down in any port that he may try to hide in.'

Reluctantly Fleming went aboard his ship to relieve McCann and Williams and send them ashore for the holiday that they had earned a thousand times over. Dick Mott was keen to continue the investigation single-handed, confident that he could establish more intimate relations with the underworld of Capetown than the police themselves, and promptly vanished among the haunts of sailorfolk like a ferret diving into a rat-hole. The rôle he assumed was that of a deserter from the Nautilus who had attacked the skipper and laid him up in hospital, and was

therefore in hiding. In this guise he was able to make acquaintance with other unobtrusive persons who had no love for the police, and to pick up bits of information here and there that slowly pieced themselves together in a working theory. Weary, but elated with success, he found Fleming late in the day.

'I've sure been circulatin' among some tough citizens that would have done "Peg" Moran's heart good,' he said. 'It's true that old man Doane got away in a boat, after Weaver hid him ashore from afternoon to near midnight. I don't see how these thick-headed cops missed him, tho' I suppose he shaved his whiskers. But Reuben Doane is a regular human lighthouse. You'd think they'd find him in an East River fog. Well, the launches that hustled out to search the shipping was just too late to catch a schooner that put out to sea in a hurry in the middle of the night — and she had no clearance papers at that.'

'And how did you find out all this?' asked Fleming. 'You didn't see any schooner.'

Dick laid a finger against his nose, winked impressively, and explained:

'Listen to the spiel of young Hawkshaw the boy detective. A few hours earlier and I'd have been offered a berth in this same schooner. More than a dozen of the hardest beach-combers in Capetown are missing. Some of them were not long out of jail: the others ought to be there. A one-eyed Portuguese boardin'-master with a scar across his ugly map passed the word on the dead quiet that this schooner needed hands. They were picked up one at a time, and Matt Weaver was behind the deal. He owns the schooner, tho' he didn't make any public holler about it because she was under suspicion.'

'And you are sure that Doane was in her?'

'Why not? He wouldn't take to the back country among

the niggers. A sailor-man in trouble beats for the open sea just like a homing-pigeon. He don't know anything else. And four or five of his own hands are missing, the meanest and orneriest of the boatload we found adrift with him. If they once double the Cape and make for the Malay islands, that schooner will be hard to find. And Weaver isn't doing all this for his health. Old man Doane had some money — trust him to have a bit salted away: but the pair of 'em have cooked up some kind of partnership that's as crooked as a ram's horn. Like as not they'll turn pirates out in the Injun Ocean and the China Seas.'

'You have been reading too many dime-novels, Dick. Reuben Doane may have persuaded Weaver to run him somewhere out to the eastward or up the African coast but it sounds like Miss Penfold's dreams to talk about pirates.'

'But that's his proper profession,' protested the other. 'Why not? He's a man with a rope around his neck. He'll never live to get out of jail, if he's caught for scuttling the Ticonderoga. He has nothin' to lose.'

The Capetown authorities, working in their own painstaking fashion, were able to confirm the story of the flight of the schooner Wanderer, and, after listening to the urgent and heated appeals of the underwriters' office and the American Consul-General, dispatched a British gunboat in belated pursuit with orders to take Reuben Doane alive or dead. Fleming was chagrined beyond words that his revenge should have been nipped in the bud, but cooler reflection convinced him that the master of the Ticonderoga must be laid by the heels sooner or later. He was a fugitive convicted of so sensational, so monstrous a maritime crime, that the newspapers and the cable would carry it to the ends of the earth.

'I am young and he is old,' said Fleming to himself.

'And I can wait. The judgment of God will overtake him as sure as the sun rises.'

The underwriters took possession of the masterless Ticonderoga pending settlement with her owners, who did not want her, but were forced to claim her, damning evidence and all.

Fleming could not be shaken in his decision to remain at Capetown, telling the agent: 'My salvage is safe enough. Let McCann and Williams go home and collect it. Reuben Doane can't be convicted until he is caught, and I shall be ready to appear against him when that happens.'

The underwriters' agent gleefully drew upon the owners for money to send Williams and McCann home in first-class fashion, with cash in their pockets, and the owners very meekly honored the draft. The sailor-men departed blithely on a mail-steamer for London, clad in new and flamboyant raiment, smoking very large and black cigars, immensely satisfied with their lot.

'Words don't mean much when it comes to thanking you for what you did for me, boys,' Fleming told them in farewell. 'You didn't do it for money, I know that. I shall keep track of you and we will have a reunion in New York as soon as I can clear up the business that keeps me here. You won't have to worry about finding berths for a while. The underwriters will take the best of care of you. There will be a good many thousand dollars to split up when the case is settled.'

'I hope I'll live to sail under ye in a ship of your own,' said McCann. 'Workin' the old hooker into port was rare sport, barrin' the fact that we was a trifle short-handed.'

'There's a barmaid down Rotherhite wye,' was the irrelevant remark of Williams, 'an' if there's a tidy bit o' money comin' to me, she and me may be settin' up for ourselves in a neat little pub with geraniums abloomin' in

the winders. An' you'll know where to find a welcome, Cap'n Fleming.'

While Fleming had been toiling night and day to rid himself of the Ticonderoga and her tangled affairs, that other derelict of fortune, the Nautilus, waited at anchor for him to come to the rescue. A new complication had arisen to add to the burdens of Miss Hester Penfold.

Ogden Haight, melancholy of demeanor, had offered his resignation as captain's clerk with this explanation: 'I gather that if you can persuade Fleming to take the ship you will want to continue the voyage. Now, much as I want to stand by you and give you my poor services, this will make an impossible situation unless I quit and go home from here. I ought to tell Fleming how shabbily I used him, don't you see? It is the only decent thing for me to do. He has blamed you and Angela for losing faith in him, which was wholly my fault. I could have set everything straight at the start if I had not behaved like a yellow pup. And, of course, it means an awful row when I do tell him. We were never on friendly terms, and he'll probably want to eat me alive, which he can jolly well do.'

'But nobody else knows anything about our cargo,' lamented Miss Penfold. 'I need you both. You must not desert me, Ogden. It would be like leaving a sinking ship. I have talked it over with Angela, who is really responsible for all this quarrelsome spirit, poor child, tho' I am sure she has not been the least bit of a flirt. And we agree that you are not bound to tell Stephen Fleming at present. Not that I fail to admire your manly stand, but can't you postpone the explosion until we can work out the fate of the Nautilus? It is for the common good, Ogden, and I am a broken-hearted old woman who throws herself on your mercy and begs you not to mar whatever chance there may be of repairing disaster.'

'I hadn't looked at both sides of the question,' confessed Haight, touched by this appeal. 'I suppose that I can put my personal problems in cold storage for a while. Fleming and I must have it out, you know, but you ought to come first. And I am sure that he would feel the same way, but his temper is a bit hasty these days, and he is foolishly jealous — oh, pshaw, fancy his being jealous of me! I am absolutely, hopelessly, inconsequential, and I know it, worse luck. Shake hands, Miss Hester, the captain's clerk hereby withdraws his resignation.'

Arthur and Dick Mott had wisely reached the same conclusion, that a policy of silence was both timely and diplomatic.

'We won't tell on Haight, not for a thousand dollars,' said Arthur. 'There has been enough riot and rebellion, and we must all get together. We need Fleming as skipper and Haight as business manager, and then you can't lose us.'

Miss Penfold had delayed making up her mind whether or not to retreat or advance, clinging to the hope that Stephen Fleming would prove himself to be the god from the machine, just as when he had appeared in Stonehaven in the brave days that were no more. He was so preoccupied and seemingly indifferent, however, that she began to lose heart, feeling rudderless and forsaken, until, *mirabile dictu*, he sprang aboard the Nautilus one sparkling, windy day and hailed her with that cheery, confident smile lighting up his nut-brown face, for all the world as if they had been whisked back to the square-sided brick mansion in Sussex Street and the wonderful plans they had worked out together. In her glad eyes he personified virile, masterful Youth, resilient, unafraid, careless of the odds, while she and Captain Burdick had been overtaken by the limping deliberation that travels at one's elbow when the shadows lengthen along life's pathway. Stephen Fleming could do

whatever he dared, thought she, as she welcomed him, affectionately, expectantly.

He was sheepish and apologetic as he stood beside her chair on deck and said: 'I was a bad-tempered, inconsiderate brute that first day on board, and in my flying little visits since I have never told you how sorry I felt. I have had the other ship on my hands until now, but the skies have cleared in that quarter.'

'And what are you going to do with us, Captain Fleming?'

'Well, I have looked the situation over after talking with Haight and Captain Burdick — and, by the way, he is a mighty fine and loyal old gentleman, for all his pig-headedness. Now, by George, if you want me to take command of your ship, I say to quit all this shilly-shallying and backing and filling and crying over spilt milk. Your grandfather never whimpered or looked back. Nail the Penfold house-flag to the mast, up anchor, and aim your bowsprit for the Orient, just as you planned to do. You have a good ship and a bully crew, and a cargo that can find a better market than this. I can pick a first mate from the fo'c'sle. The men have a lot of confidence in me because of that trick of bringing the Ticonderoga to port. They don't want to leave you and go home with Captain Burdick, not a man of them.'

'And to think that I had almost decided to go home myself, discouraged and heartsick!' cried Miss Penfold. 'Why, this is like hearing a bugle call.'

'Miss Angela made me feel like jumping overboard,' ruefully confessed the sailor. 'She wasn't even glad to see me. But I will try to keep out of her way, though I suppose she will dislike having me on board.'

'Oh, you great, stupid, blindfolded goose!' chided Miss Hester. 'If you knew no more about handling a ship than you know about managing a slip of a girl, I should be deathly afraid to go to sea with you.'

CHAPTER X

SAIL HO!

Measured by the standards of prosaic common-sense, it was folly to think of continuing the voyage of the Nautilus. It goes without saying that Miss Hester Penfold ought to have forsaken her fantastic, extravagant adventure, straightway gathered together the fragments of her fortune, and, putting the money at interest, dragged out a pinching existence in Stonehaven. Angela was capable of supporting herself as a schoolmistress and Arthur might better be searching the advertising columns to find 'an opening for an active, able-bodied youth' than to be racketing over the face of the waters with his godless chum Dick Mott.

Thus it had begun to appear to these stranded pilgrims until Stephen Fleming spoke his manifesto and took it upon himself to splice the broken strands of destiny. After all, a young shipmaster was needed to lead these argonauts. A man old enough to know better would not have dared to stand by the sinking Ticonderoga and sail her into port. Miss Penfold might dream her dreams, but Youth must guide the helm. She had wilted like a fragile flower in a rough wind, but now she revived and bloomed quite miraculously. There were no more sad and clouded discussions. Everything moved briskly, with swing and gusto and animation. Fleming put new heart into the crew, fine, self-respecting fellows recruited from the New England fishing fleets, co-owners in the coastwise trade, and Nova Scotia barks. Convinced that the 'hoodoo' had been banished, they turned to with hearty confidence in the new skipper, ready to follow him through 'hell or high water.'

That Miss Penfold had lost her wealth no longer troubled them. Wages be hanged! To a man they were eager to see the adventure through to the finish, blow high, blow low. Fleming found as many as four of them who had mates' papers, and chose his own first officer from among them.

The departure was significantly unlike that from Stonehaven when the Nautilus had been wafted by pleasant breezes over a tranquil summer sea, fitting circumstances for an aged skipper past the stormy years of his life's voyage. Now the stout ship drove out to face the gales and the great swinging seas of the Cape passage, like a trained pugilist stripped for the ring. When she plunged out from Table Bay and made her offing, the wind was piping lustily, and Captain Stephen Fleming, sure of the strength of hull, spars, and canvas, laughed to himself as he clapped on sail, and noted what gallant weather the Nautilus made of it. Before nightfall of the first day he passed a wallowing tank of a big English steel bark snugged down to reefed topsails, while the Stonehaven ship was tearing along with dry decks under topgallant sails and royals.

'We'll be banged about before we fetch past Cape Agulhas,' he shouted to Miss Penfold, 'but we shall lose no more time than I can help. Walk her along, and while she cracks she holds, as Bucko McCann used to say.' He swung his arm in the direction of the English bark, and added jubilantly: 'This is the kind of picture that used to delight your father's heart when he was taking this old packet around the Horn, or racing the British tea-wagons home from China to London. Those were the days when he showed all the world how to carry sail, while the other fellows lay hove-to.'

Ah, this was to be alive to the finger-tips, with the blood dancing, and the surging green seas sounding their immemorial invitation to the brave in heart, and the wind

shouting the chant that has lured legions of fetterless rovers and masterless men.

Captain Chester Burdick had sorrowfully spoken a true word: 'Well, Andrew, we're ready for the junk-heap. Ought to have stayed ashore, both of us. Too old to go romancin' around.'

Forgotten was the disaster that had overtaken the Penfold riches. The ship's company, in cabin and forecastle, had become joyous ocean vagabonds, and a seaman melodiously expressed the pervading spirit when his voice came floating back from the spray-swept bow: 'I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way.'

No more was this voyage 'play-acting.' These were fortune-hunters in very truth, and their 'adventure' implied all that the fine old word had meant in the golden age of Stonehaven ships and sailors. All the cobwebs had been brushed away from Miss Penfold's brain. She marveled how she could have been so weak and so unworthy of her ancestors as to lose heart and waver from her course.

Week after week Fleming crowded the ship onward with the same fiery zest and daring, past the stormy ramparts of the Cape, across the Indian Ocean toward her distant goal beyond Sunda Straits. He was on deck at all hours, vigilant, exceedingly careful for all his hardihood, unceasingly watching his vessel and the telltale portents of sea and sky. The possibility of encountering Captain Reuben Doane in the Wanderer schooner was often in his thoughts, and he quietly took such precautions as might defend the ship against attack at sea. Lest his passengers should take alarm, this work was done in the night watches and the mates and men were sworn to secrecy. Unwilling to mar Miss Penfold's happiness, he forebore to remind her that she had been unwise in confiding so guilelessly in Reuben Doane, even when she said: 'Captain Doane told me such

thrilling stories of being attacked by Malay pirates in the very waters through which we expect to pass, and I explained how defenseless we were, but of course such danger is not worth worrying about nowadays. His encounters happened a good many years ago, but it gave one the most delicious shudders to hear about them.'

This danger had seemed absurdly remote while the ship lay at anchor in Table Bay, but now it began to haunt Fleming's mind, although he tried to laugh at his fears. It had not seriously occurred to him that Reuben Doane might have any other reason for falling afoul of the Nautilus except to take the specie out of her, after the manner of an armed highwayman. And this had been no more than an idle surmise, disturbing but hardly credible. Now, however, the motive of revenge was not to be set aside as Fleming threshed over the matter in his own thoughts. If Reuben Doane had hated him and tried to put him out of the way in the Ticonderoga, how vastly more malignant must be the emotions of that blasted, fugitive shipmaster at the present time! To fall into his hands would mean a short shrift for Fleming, the man who had put a price on his head.

There were times when, as Fleming walked the deck in the darkness, he reproached himself for a hot-headed fool to run the slightest risk with Miss Penfold and Angela Breck in his safe-keeping. Perhaps the singular behavior of Angela had something to do with these low-spirited hours. It was torment enough that she should be civil to Ogden Haight. The fellow ought to have been left at home, in the first place. But she actually seemed to find him companionable and entertaining and openly praised his industry and his commercial talents as captain's clerk. The young shipmaster was eminently sane and clear-eyed in whatever concerned seamanship and navigation, but his vision was somewhat befogged by jealousy when it came to the more

difficult art of fathoming the way of a maid with a man. Perhaps she was piqued because he was so much absorbed in handling his ship, for he was up and about through the night hours and slept by day when the weather was fair. Moreover, the experience in the Ticonderoga had taxed his endurance and nervous energy more severely than he was aware, so that he was not the most sprightly company when at leisure. He still nursed a grievance, believing that Angela might have welcomed his return from the dead more warmly without being unmaidenly, and the upshot of it was that his manner was distant and offended, while she remained serenely oblivious to his discontent. Miss Penfold, with feminine intuition, arrived at three clean-cut conclusions which she mentally summarized as follows:

First, Angela was making herself conspicuously agreeable to Ogden Haight with ulterior design and purpose.

Second, that purpose was aimed at Stephen Fleming.

Third, the more foolish and wrong-headed he became, the more uncomfortable she intended to make him feel.

'And this is the man who stood by the Ticonderoga,' said Miss Penfold to herself. 'And where Angela is concerned, he hasn't the courage of a mouse. If he should try bullying her, she would be as meek as a lamb.'

If Fleming had disappointed Miss Penfold as a lover, he pleased her beyond measure as a sailor. Apparently he was a man of one idea at a time, with a chivalrous devotion to duty which shoved even dearer ambitions and desires into the background. For his part, he was strong in the belief that he must stand or fall with the Penfold adventure with which his own fate had become so inextricably involved. Let him win success for the ship and then he would be free to try to discover what was in the heart of Angela Breck.

When the Nautilus was within a fortnight's sailing of Sunda Straits and the port of Batavia, a scorching breath-

less calm befell. Day after day the oily sea was unruffled except by aimless, tantalizing cat's-paws of breeze, while the yards were braced this way and that to keep steerage way on the helpless ship. On the third day a speck of sail was visible against the glassy horizon. It hung in the same place hour after hour, evidently becalmed. Next morning it seemed to have moved a trifle nearer, as if swept by a random breath of wind or a slant of current. Having nothing else to look at, the Nautilus people became curious concerning the gleaming bit of canvas, and the sailors recalled the strange fact that two ships will be drawn toward each other in a calm streak as if by some magnetic attraction. Before sunset Captain Fleming gazed with more particular scrutiny at the other vessel. Hull down as she was, and vague and shimmering in the dazzling refraction, he made her out to be a two-masted topsail schooner with an immense spread of cloth.

'A schooner with a square topsail and topgallant sail forward,' he said to himself. 'That rig is not often seen in American waters. I hope that she keeps her distance until we get a breeze. I don't quite like the look of her.'

He climbed aloft, the spy-glass slung about his neck. The schooner lay to the southward, and, as the sun sank low, the sea lost its blinding, quivering glare, and, for a little while before twilight, the horizon was etched more clearly so that the spars of the schooner were outlined in delicate tracery. While Fleming gazed at her, the cloud-like expanse of sail became curiously foreshortened, and he instantly comprehended that the schooner had turned to head toward the Nautilus. Before the light began to wane, he discerned the black, threadlike streak of the low hull, and, that which gave him grave anxiety, two minute dots which crawled out from the schooner's side and ranged in front of her bow.

Absently polishing the lens with a handkerchief, he raised the glass again, tensely scrutinizing, nor did he cease to gaze until the schooner slowly faded in shadow like a dissolving film. The two dots in front of the schooner had maintained their position unchanged. He had recognized them as boats towing the schooner toward the becalmed Nautilus.

'If we put out our boats and try to tow, the schooner will go two feet to our one, and she may be able to use sweeps for all I know,' he said to himself. 'This looks very much to me as if Reuben Doane was out yonder.'

Unwilling to descend to the deck until he had clearly decided what ought to be done, because any wavering on his part would influence the crew, he methodically took stock of the situation. He was no heedless swashbuckler when in close quarters with danger and the circumstances were such that he would rather run away than fight. Of course, he could not be certain of his suspicions. The schooner might be some other than the Wanderer, perhaps short of water or seeking the ship to ask the longitude, but her appearance, and the ocean track in which she had been sighted, as if seeking to intercept the Nautilus this side of Sunda Straits, were sufficiently ominous coincidences to warrant the most serious suspicions. Fleming glanced down at his own vessel, noted that the side-lights were burning, and that a yellow radiance streamed through the cabin skylights. 'I can't very well keep it to myself,' he reflected. 'Every light must be put out or screened, and I shall have to explain why.'

His mates and men asked no questions when this order was passed along, for the captain was a strict disciplinarian, besides which they had already decided for themselves that the schooner must be the Wanderer.

'No smoking on deck to-night,' Fleming announced.

'In a still night like this the flare of a match can be seen half a mile away. That schooner is towing as if she meant to lay us alongside and I think her intentions may be unfriendly. Of course they have taken our compass bearings, but a puff or breeze may make us hard to find.'

The little group on the quarterdeck was not so well disciplined and plied him with eager questions. His voice was strong and steady, but he evaded direct answer until Miss Penfold besought him, and the words palpitated with anxiety: 'Do you think we are to be attacked in the night? Can it be true that Captain Doane is in pursuit of us?'

'I am inclined to think he is in that schooner,' said Fleming. 'The chances were all against his sighting us in this vast stretch of ocean, but the Devil looks after his own.'

Calling her to one side, he spoke rapidly and earnestly: 'It was wrong for me to expose you to a risk like this. If this other vessel is really the Wanderer, Reuben Doane will want the specie. And of course he will be very anxious to get hold of me. Now I am wholly responsible for bringing you into such a predicament, and I must find a way out of it. Those cut-throats and outlaws must not be allowed to come on board. They will not molest the Nautilus, I am quite sure, if they are given what they are coming after.'

'Do you mean that I am to give you up along with the specie?' impetuously cried the owner of the Nautilus. 'Stephen Fleming, I am simply amazed that you should even hint at such a possibility! You sacrificed yourself once, for Angela's sake. You shall not do it again for my sake or for hers. You are not to blame for this mischance.'

'I thought that, if it came to fighting, you or Angela might be accidentally hurt,' he returned, 'and of course I can't face that without wishing to protect you. It is the only decent thing to do, for me to let you know that I am not to be considered if it comes to a question of your safety.'

'And do you suppose that the Penfold house-flag never before defied pirates in these waters?' quoth she. 'Was there ever a Breck or a Penfold who struck a bargain with these dastardly creatures? Let me call Angela. You shall hear what she has to say.'

Hearing her name spoken, the girl appeared from the star-lit dusk as if she had been awaiting a summons.

'Stephen Fleming is thinking too much of our safety,' exclaimed Miss Penfold. 'I have not been a brave or a resolute woman during this voyage, Angela, but I have no intention of casting any more shame on my ancestors. Shall we yield to whatever demands this schooner may make in order to protect ourselves, our ship, and our cargo? What is your opinion?'

Angela moved a step nearer Stephen Fleming, her face luminous against the star-spattered curtain of night.

'Don't give up the ship,' she said, quietly, confidently, as if that immortal phrase summed up the situation. 'I can guess what Captain Fleming has been telling you, Aunt Hester. Of course we shall fight and we shall beat them off. We women are not to be considered. The crew must forget we are on board.'

Fleming bowed. Misunderstandings, jealousies, bickerings seemed inconsequential in this large and lonely night so fraught with hidden peril. Fleming felt ennobled, exalted, by the verdict of these gentle, gracious women who were inspired by a tradition, an ideal, a sentiment, if you please, and were resolved to uphold these intangible things.

The serious aspect of this conference was lightened by Angela who exclaimed with a tremulous little laugh: 'I am so glad I brought the "Sailor's Vade Mecum," Aunt Hester. Do you recall the chapter, "Showing How to Prepare a Merchant Ship for a Close Fight by Disposing of Their Bulkheads, Leaves, Coamings, Look-holes, etc."? And the

advice to the "young shipmaster," telling him how to "make a Sally to complete your Victory"?'

'We have the "young shipmaster," now,' triumphantly cried Miss Penfold. 'He came sailing back to us and he will save us from all harm.'

Fleming walked away, but turned on his heel and earnestly counseled: 'If it really should come to close quarters, you must promise me to go below and stay there. There may be some shot flying about.'

'If any of our men should be hurt, I shall have everything made ready in the saloon to take care of them,' said Angela.

'God forbid!' piously exclaimed Miss Penfold. 'Now, Stephen Fleming, you must dismiss us from your mind.'

He went forward to muster his men and make ready to receive the schooner. The clash might not occur before daylight, or until Reuben Doane was certain of the identity of the Nautilus. His conjecture was apt to be trustworthy, however, even at long range, for this three-masted, full-rigged Yankee ship had her own distinguishing marks in the set of her masts and the cut of her sails. However, if any doubt existed, the Wanderer might be towed close enough to sight the Nautilus and then lay off until morning before hailing her.

Miss Penfold's passion for realism had inspired her to decorate the saloon walls with a collection of rusty boarding-pikes and cutlasses rescued from the débris of one of her warehouses and long stowed away in her attic for safe-keeping. They had been wielded by the doughty Penfolds whose portraits hung in the library. These were speedily wrenched from their fastenings and given to the ship's carpenter with instructions to set his grindstone whirling and sharpen them as best he could. A few modern rifles and revolvers had been included in the list of the ship's equip-

ment, at Fleming's suggestion, and these were distributed among the coolest and steadiest men.

Then Ogden Haight was asked to overhaul the cargo manifests and break out various boxes and kegs of small hardware, spikes, flatirons, and the like, to serve as missiles for the battery of ancient brass cannon for which only powder had been provided. The guns were cast loose from their lashings, the tackle carefully seen to, and men assigned as crews for them with gun captains in charge. Fleming assumed that this armament would be useless except at point-blank range, but if an attack should be made in small boats these old-fashioned pieces might help to repel boarders. Certainly a basketful of nails, chain-links, and assorted hardware slapped into his vitals would be likely to discourage even Reuben Doane himself.

Dick Mott was closely questioned concerning the probable force on board the schooner. He was almost speechless with excitement, but managed to make coherent response.

'As near as I could find out, that night I was playin' detective in Capetown, there was at least a dozen strong-arm lads missing, but more of 'em may have sneaked away for all I know. Then there was a small crew in the schooner — you learned that for yourself, sir — and there was some of Reuben Doane's old hands.'

'Then there must be between twenty and thirty of them,' said Fleming, 'perhaps more. And a bad lot. Some of them must have sailed with Matt Weaver when he was smuggling and gun-running in the Philippines. Well, we are almost thirty strong, and we can whip them out of their boots.'

'And don't you forget to count me,' piped up Arthur Breck whose teeth were chattering, though not from cold. 'Say, this is too much like a story-book, isn't it? Aunt Hester is certainly getting her money's worth.'

'You will be assigned to duty as powder-monkey,' said Fleming as he slapped the panicky lad on the back. 'The powder-sacks will be piled on the floor of the fo'c'sle, and you are to keep the gunners supplied and look out for sparks.'

'And don't I wield a cutlass, Captain Fleming? I can hold it in my teeth while I deal out the powder.'

'You will be careful to keep under cover behind the bulwarks, or I solemnly swear to spank you unmercifully,' was the heartless retort. 'I saved your skin once and I intend to keep it whole.'

Arthur stole away with Dick, who wore a halo because he had been ordered to perch in the foretop and pepper the schooner's deck with a formidable revolver which had been concealed in his personal luggage — that is, when he was not otherwise occupied in tending sail.

'Captain of the foretop!' enviously exclaimed Arthur. 'Mister Midshipman Easy hasn't anything on you. Do you feel scared?'

'My stomach feels queer, and my swallower don't slip up and down as slick as usual,' frankly confessed the captain of the foretop. 'How about you?'

'I have an all-gone feeling directly under my belt-buckle and I am sort of wobbly when I walk, Dick. Captain Reuben Doane has chased me in nightmares so many times that I reckon I am gun-shy. We can't lose him. He is the original bogey-man, even though he was made up as Santa Claus. Do you honestly think he will tackle our ship?'

'Sure thing. He is raving crazy to get even with Captain Fleming, and he needs the coin. Why, a dyed-in-the-wool pirate like him could smell that specie from here to the coast of Sumatra. Oh, we are up against it good and plenty, but I shan't be really scared if it comes to a show-

down. Maybe I can pot him myself with me trusty forty-four. I bought it cheap in a Bowery pawnshop for just this kind of performance. I don't know, though, that a bullet can kill him 'less it's made of solid silver and was moulded by a cross-eyed Finn in the dark of the moon.'

When his men had grouped themselves in the waist, Captain Fleming talked to them very simply.

'I expect you to behave yourselves like American seamen,' he said. 'You are a picked crew; you have been handsomely treated; and I know that you are loyal and grateful. This is an old-time Yankee ship bound out on an old-time Yankee voyage. You know what that schooner is, if I have guessed right, and why she is after us. We are going to give her a dose of old-time Yankee medicine. Now, keep a bright lookout, don't be nervous, and, God willing, we shall rid the sea of a gang of rascals that deserve hanging.'

The men cheered, scattered to their stations, and the ship became almost silent. There was not a breath of wind. The sails hung limp and swaying from the yards, and the phosphorescent ocean slumbered profoundly.

Returning aft from a tour of the deck, Fleming encountered Ogden Haight, who said rather irritably: 'You have not told me what to do. I know you have a damnably small opinion of me, but I have no intention of hiding in the hold, don't you know, and I want a chance to make good.'

A reviving twinge of jealousy made Fleming scowl, but he fought down the unworthy emotion and replied:

'I need all my men to work the ship and fight her. I am going to give you the most important post on board. I want you to stay with the ladies and act as a bodyguard. Make them stay below, and don't leave them for an instant. I have a revolver for you.'

'Thank you,' stammered Ogden. 'It is awfully good of you. I should like to be on deck, but you can count on me to stay where I am put.'

'You are a good deal more of a man than when I first met you,' was Fleming's grimly delivered compliment, 'or I would not assign you to a station.'

Between midnight and dawn, Fleming heard a very small, cadenced sound, scarcely audible, which came from the water to the southward. Instantly alert, he listened until he was ready to swear that this faint, rhythmic noise was the thump of muffled oars in thole-pins, a sound which traveled far in such a calm night as this. It was impossible to determine whether the boats were stealthily drawing near as a boarding-party or still towing the schooner. At length, however, he noted that a bright star low toward the southern horizon vanished and reappeared after a few seconds' interval as if a drifting cloud had veiled it. Taking it for granted that the canvas of the schooner had caused this eclipse, she must be moving along and was therefore still in tow. Slowly a gray elusive shadow, a mere formless smudge, was focused in sharper outline, and the sound of oars ceased.

'Oh, for a rattling breeze and a chance to outsail her on a bowline!' sighed Fleming, wetting a finger and holding it up in the still air. 'An Irishman's gale, straight up and down the mast.'

The first faint streak of morning tinted the cloudless horizon before the waiting, silent schooner showed signs of life. Daylight came swiftly to this tropic sea, like the lifting of a curtain, and it seemed no more than a few minutes before the Nautilus stood revealed, idle as a painted ship, the rosy-fingered dawn glowing on her tall spires of canvas. Just as distinct and as airily beautiful was the heavily sparred schooner which rested no more than a few cable-

lengths distant. No other sail was to be seen around the whole rim of the horizon.

The schooner's boats were riding astern and presently one of them was hauled alongside. Half a dozen men tumbled into her and behind them descended more deliberately a tall, commanding figure of a man who sat himself down in the stern and picked up the tiller ropes. The oars splashed into the languid, almost imperceptible swells, and the boat crept jerkily toward the ship until the beholders recognized Captain Reuben Doane, shorn of that magnificent white beard which had been his banner of respectability. As soon as the boat was within hailing distance, he rose to his feet, and stood easily, poised, shading his eyes with his hand as his gaze sought the quarterdeck of the Nautilus. His countenance was seamed and harsh and sinister, nor was he in a pleasant temper as he shouted in his deep, resonant tones:

'Nautilus, ahoy! I'll waste no words. Bring your specie aboard the schooner in your own boats and be quick about it. I want you, too, Fleming.'

'And if I refuse, what then?' replied Fleming.

'We'll take what we want, and sink your ship,' was the measured answer. 'My compliments to the ladies. The consequences will be most distressing to them. I can't promise to keep my men in hand if I am compelled to board your ship by force.'

Fleming's temper boiled over at this diabolical threat and he thundered with headlong vehemence: 'So help me God, I will finish you and your schooner right here. Come and take us.'

He flourished an arm at the mate who jumped to the signal halliards and the Penfold house-flag, the blue Maltese cross on the white background, soared aloft. There was as much discretion as valor in the boat's crew of Cap-

tain Reuben Doane, for they bent frantically to their oars and churned the water to foam as if expecting a volley. They were no more than alongside the schooner when Fleming ordered his gun crews to the battery of six-pounders, all four of which were ranged in the starboard side to command the hostile vessel.

As soon as matches were lighted and the pieces sighted, the skipper roared: 'Give them a broadside of junk. We'll open the ball.'

The brass guns went off with a most inspiriting racket, powder-smoke veiled the deck, and the sturdy gunners danced in boyish delight. On the schooner's deck every man fell flat as if bowled over by a big wind, but the charges of hurtling hardware did no great execution. Most of the missiles spattered the water or ripped through the sails and rigging, while a few splintered the bulwarks, and knocked holes in the deckhouses. Two of the men were seen to rise and limp aft, one holding his hands to his head.

'That hardware scatters most infernally,' lamented Fleming. 'However, we astonished them and they will not dare to tow any nearer. Nor are they apt to risk having their boats sunk by trying to board us.'

Reuben Doane and Matt Weaver had other tactics in mind. The broadside had been unexpected, indeed, because this archaic saluting battery had been considered a negligible factor. Again the boats were manned, this time on the lee side of the schooner, and they began laboriously to tow her out of range of the ship's guns. It was a task most unwillingly undertaken by the ruffians at the oars, for they had to endure the discomfiting fire of the six-pounders, besides which a dozen rifles were popping away at them.

Fleming mopped his face and wondered what deviltry was brewing. He had counted sixteen men in the two boats,

of whom three or four had been wounded or drowned. There were at least as many more on the schooner's deck, or a more formidable total than had been estimated. He watched them running to and fro, Captain Doane storming among them as if trying to rally a party for some particular purpose. Soon a group was clustered around a long canvas-covered object mounted in the bow. A brisk rifle fire from the ship served to confuse them, but the distance was too great for effective marksmanship and the men were herded back again to toil furiously until they had uncovered and made ready for action what was unmistakably a small rapid-fire gun. Its slender black tube of a barrel was swung round to rake the hull of the Nautilus and Stephen Fleming smothered a groan of consternation.

'Nothing old-fashioned about that,' said he. 'An up-to-date one-pounder that will shoot steel shells into us as fast as they feed them into the breech. They can stand off half a mile or more and riddle us through and through until the ship looks like a porous plaster. Farragut himself would have been helpless against one rapid-fire gun.'

'A piece of Captain Weaver's Philippine plunder,' replied the first mate, who was nervously running his fingers through his hair and eyeing his commander rather wistfully as if wondering how he expected to pull out of this predicament. Fleming thought of the two women in the cabins and he was sick at heart. He had been a fool to assume that Captain Doane would risk bungling this business. Reprisal seemed hopeless. The seamen deserted the six-pounders and stood sullenly watching the schooner from whose bow came a sound like the sharp crack of a whip, instantly followed by a noise in the air overhead that suggested the twanging of a taut banjo string as the steel shell flew between the masts.

'A trifle too high,' said Fleming, 'but they will soon find

the range. We are a splendid target. What wouldn't I give for a blessed wind!'

The schooner's gun cracked again. This time the shell tore through the stout oak bulwarks, ploughed a shower of splinters from the deck, several men being slightly hurt by flying fragments. It was obvious that the planking offered no shelter against this venomous weapon, and Fleming sent for Ogden Haight and besought him: 'For Heaven's sake, take the women down into the hold, below the water-line! They can't stay in the cabin. We're being shot to pieces.'

A quick rustle of skirts made him start, and he turned to behold Angela Breck running across the deck.

Fleming leaped to meet her. 'You must not stay here. Haight will take you to a safe place.'

'I can't hide below any longer,' she panted, wide-eyed and breathless. 'I must know what you intend to do. Are we helpless? Are you going to haul down your colors?'

Just then a shell smashed the companionway from which she had emerged only a moment before and exploded in one of the deck beams. A jagged bit of flying steel ripped the skin from Fleming's forehead, but she was unharmed. Wiping the blood from his eyes so that he might see to drag her, willing or not, to the cabin stairway, he declared: 'I don't want to be rough, but you must obey orders. No, I am not hurt. It is nothing but a scratch. We can stand a good deal more pounding. Tell Miss Penfold that the luck is bound to turn.'

'But what can you do? This is so wicked and cruel and unfair!' cried Angela as Ogden Haight implored her to go below with him.

'Whistle for wind,' said the skipper. 'This calm cannot last forever, and as long as the ship floats and there are men enough to work her, we shall sit and take our punishment. I don't see what else can be done.'

CHAPTER XI

AN OLD-FASHIONED EPISODE

SHELL after shell pelted through the timbers of the helpless ship, but her people somehow escaped death, until at length a fine young seaman stationed at the wheel fell with a gasping cry, his body almost cut in twain. Fleming flinched and clenched his fists, his face contorted with passionate grief, as he ordered the poor shattered body carried forward and covered with a tarpaulin. A moment later the carpenter hurried aft to report that the ship had been struck just at the water-line and was leaking.

'Lower yourself outside and hammer a plug into the hole and make it as tight as you can,' was the command. 'There will be more mending for you to do before we get out of this scrape.'

'The men feel mighty bad about losing young Holcomb,' said the carpenter, 'but they aren't ready to quit, if you please, sir. They sort of feel in their bones that you will fetch 'em through all safe, same as you did with the Ticonderoga. Their fightin' blood is up. All they ask is a fair chance.'

'God bless them for that!' cried the captain. 'And, hurrah, look yonder, they are going to have it!'

To the northward a patch of ocean was streaked blue with dancing ripples. The breeze was sweeping straight toward the ship, and already a little draught of cooler air fanned Fleming's cheek. The sails stirred and the yards creaked in the slings. The schooner still swam in the breathless calm, for she lay dead to leeward of the ship. A quick glance told Fleming that the Nautilus would be able to gather steerageway before the Wanderer could move from

her position. To escape the range of the rapid-fire gun by means of flight seemed almost hopeless, but Fleming had no thought of flight. In a flash of sailorly comprehension his plan was made. His voice rang out in one swift, clean-cut order after another, and as headsails were trimmed and yards swung, the Nautilus began to wear around to head straight for the schooner. The cook, stewards, sailmaker, and other 'idlers' were told off to tend the sheets and braces, and Captain Stephen Fleming shouted to his seamen the command, which had not echoed along the decks of a Penfold ship for generations:

'All hands make ready to board! Follow me! Keep together and hit hard! It is our turn now.'

There was no hanging back as the score of Yankee sailors caught up boarding-pikes, cutlasses, capstan bars, and revolvers, and ran forward ready to swarm over the bows. The second mate stood poised with a grappling iron and coil of heaving line to toss into the schooner's rigging and make fast to her, as if he knew by rote the procedure of a boarding-party. Goaded and maddened by the cowardly, waspish attack of the rapid-fire gun, the men were in no mood to weigh the odds nor to think of the danger of a hand-to-hand scrimmage.

Before he joined them, Fleming told the first mate: 'You will handle the ship, Mr. McArthur. Keep her fast to the schooner, and, if anything happens to me, make for Batavia.'

The Nautilus was surging straight toward the Wanderer, whose sails were just now beginning to fill as she forged very slowly ahead, but she had not way enough to avoid the towering ship which had the weather gauge. Fleming's party stared curiously down at her low deck and the excited, yelling mob which appeared to be in a state of panic. White men, brown, and yellow they were, English, Portu-

guese, Dutch, Malay, and Chinese, the evil riff-raff of tropical beaches and ports and islands of the Orient. They fled from the one-pounder as the ship drew near and the rifles of Fleming's men drove them to seek cover.

Taken by surprise, Captain Matt Weaver had no mettle for this desperate hammer-and-tongs encounter and wavered irresolute, but Reuben Doane was not so easily dismayed. He had bullied and terrorized merchant sailors all his life, and he had no intention of retreating from the crew of the Nautilus. Shouting blasphemous commands, he thrust Weaver aside, and took charge of the schooner which had filled away on one tack, fluttered into the wind, and filled away again as if undecided whether to fight or run.

Heedless of the exhortations of Ogden Haight, Miss Hester Penfold had come on deck and stood beside Angela, holding fast to her hand, paying no attention to the scattering rifle and pistol fire from the schooner.

Stephen Fleming seemed to have forgotten them, and just before he went forward Miss Hester caught him by the sleeve and exclaimed: 'You will need every man. Let Ogden go with you. He wishes to. Leave Arthur with us. I am not afraid that you will be driven back.'

Fleming dove after the militant Arthur, who was dragging a boarding-pike longer than himself, seized him by the collar, and hauled him back to the quarterdeck out of harm's way. There was no time for parley or farewell. 'God bless you,' whispered Angela, and Fleming smiled, wistfully, boyishly, as he waved his hand and leaped for the deck below. No sooner had he reached the tall, sheering bow than the ship swung majestically from her course to cross the track of the schooner. The collision was inevitable. Reuben Doane ran forward, his rascals crowding at his heels to meet the impending attack.

The vessels came together with a grinding crash, the

bowsprit of the Nautilus harpooning the schooner's jib and tearing away the stays. The falling top-hamper became entangled with the yards of the ship which moved ponderously ahead with the momentum of her great weight, bringing down the schooner's foretopmast. Thus they were locked together in a death-grip without need of grappling iron which the second mate whirled about his head and dextrously launched at the nearest foe, felling him in his tracks.

Fleming jumped to the Wanderer's deck, his men close behind him. He had kicked off his shoes to make his footing more secure, and bareheaded, barearmed, he swung a heavy cutlass and dashed into the ruck of the Wanderer's crew which had been more or less demoralized by the falling sails and spars that left them scant fighting room. While they had no great stomach for a conflict at close quarters, men who battle with a rope around their necks are capable of a desperate resistance, and after the first shock of the onset, the Nautilus party found itself in the thick of an engagement which raged around the forecastle.

The Wanderer's men fought mostly with clubbed rifles, sheath-knives, and Malay krises, rallying around Captain Reuben Doane, who shot a Nautilus man through the body with a pistol, wrenched away his cutlass, and swept a path toward Fleming, who was no less eager to meet him. Between them men were hacking, striking, shooting, with yells and cheers and curses, stumbling over those who were already down. Although the Nautilus crew were outnumbered, they had been trained for this supreme test by clean living and months of hardy exercise at sea, and had the greater endurance. Moreover, they were of the Anglo-Saxon breed which through centuries of sea-fighting has shown a singular aptitude and eagerness in coming to close quarters and clearing the enemy's decks.

They held together in a compact body, every man confident of his neighbor's pluck and with a thought in the back of his head for the two women on board his ship whose defender he was.

Stephen Fleming dodged a knife-thrust, jammed ahead to let his good right arm swing free, and from the tail of his eye caught a glimpse of Ogden Haight, debonair in white flannels, lunging with a boarding-pike at a swarthy scoundrel who was whirling a rifle like a flail. An instant later, the president of the Stonehaven Golf Club uttered a blood-curdling yell as he ducked under his adversary's guard and drove the steel point of the pike between his ribs. Fleming grinned, shouted 'Good boy,' and pressed forward.

Tripping over a wounded man, he fell to his knees, and, as he struggled to regain his footing and defend himself, Captain Reuben Doane sprang at him, his cutlass upraised, his teeth bared in a snarling grimace. The blade whistled downward in a great shearing stroke aimed at Fleming's head. Ogden Haight made a quick effort to parry the blow and was so far successful that the blade struck the oak shaft of his pike, bit into it, and glanced to one side, cutting a deep gash in his shoulder. The blood dyed his white shirt as he reeled to one side and slowly retreated, his progress becoming more languid until he collapsed in a quiet corner of the schooner's deck beneath the overhanging bowsprit of the Nautilus. There the first mate spied him and sent two men to carry him back on board the ship, fearing he might bleed to death where he lay.

Fleming had been aware of this deed which had saved his life, but he could not turn back to lend a helping hand. His men were slowly fighting their way aft, and he was face to face with Reuben Doane, whose gaunt, truculent visage dripped with sweat while his breath was sorely labored. A grim colossus of a man he was, even though he felt the weight

of years in this terrific stress, and Fleming was conscious of being afraid of him even as they clinched in a desperate embrace, each striving to get clear and ply his weapon. The pressure of the men in the rear pinned them together for a moment, then as the scrimmage swung away to one side, Fleming took a backward step and the two cutlasses rang together as Captain Doane intercepted a mighty blow which, unchecked, would have split his head like an apple. Shifting his feet, the younger man was instantly ready to renew the attack, his body lightly, warily poised, his nether lip hard held between his teeth, his face darkly flushed and savage.

Before he could strike, the implacable hatred which disfigured the harsh lineaments of Reuben Doane gave way to an expression of dazed astonishment, and he threw up his arms, the cutlass falling from his open hand and rattling on deck. Slowly he swayed for a moment, then toppled over and crashed full length as falls an uprooted tree. Incredulous and amazed, Fleming stooped and turned him over, for the fight had swept past and left them somewhat isolated. No bullet had struck down Reuben Doane. There was neither mark nor scratch upon him.

'The judgment of God!' panted Fleming, awed and thankful that his hand had not slain him. 'It had to be. His heart was rotten and his time had come.'

The debt was paid, the account squared, and for once the blind way of destiny had led unswervingly to the gates of retribution. As a slate is sponged clean, so Stephen Fleming cast into the limbo of forgotten things the cruel wrongs he had suffered at the hands of the master of the Ticonderoga, and the further evil that the dead man had planned to do.

There was no more lust for slaughter in his heart as he followed after his men who had swept the huddled defenders

of the schooner aft and were sturdily smiting them hip and thigh. The bravest of the pirates turned at bay and fought like cornered rats, but the retreat had become a rout and more than half the number were dead or wounded. Some of them were crying for quarter, but the boarding-party was bent on exterminating this nest of vermin. Fleming was moved to smile at the far from heroic figure of Captain Matt Weaver, who was dancing up and down upon the cabin roof and bawling: 'We surrender! Call off your men! Damn it, haven't you got sense enough to quit?'

Fleming shouldered among his comrades, knocked them this way and that, wresting their weapons from them, exhorting them to have mercy. Reluctantly they drew away, sputtering and grumbling, careless of their hurts. Some stood leaning on their bloody boarding-pikes, sore spent for breath while their leader told them to disarm the prisoners and drive the unwounded into the empty hold, Captain Weaver included.

'I swear I don't know what to do with the beggars,' said Fleming, eyeing them with great disfavor. 'I should like nothing better than to hang every one of them. Let them stay as they are with a guard at the hatch until we can look after our own men.'

Leaving a squad on board, he climbed wearily to the Nautilus whither five of his own wounded had been carried. He sighed heavily as he passed the still and silent figures of two of his crew, their upturned faces covered by handkerchiefs. So expeditiously had the improvised hospital corps done its work that the injured were already below in the saloon.

The first mate respectfully touched his straw hat and explained: 'As fast as we saw a Nautilus man down, sir, we tried to fetch him clear of the ruction and hustle him aboard here to be patched up. The ship didn't need any handling

once we were fast alongside, and I took the liberty of looking after the wounded. Even the cook waltzed aboard and dragged out his man.'

'Well done, Mr. McArthur. Now cut the ship free of the schooner and overhaul your running rigging and make temporary repairs. We shall take the schooner in tow for the present.'

Fleming went below and found the cabin saloon transformed into a hospital which resembled the cockpit of an old-time frigate. Cots and mattresses were ranged between the walls and the massive dining-table, and the air was heavy with the reek of iodoform and carbolic acid. To and fro with quiet, quick footfall moved Angela Breck. Simply dressed in white, her dark, abundant hair bound round with a strip of some soft white stuff, she looked like a capable nurse, trained for such an ordeal as this. Though her lip quivered and her eyes were wet, she was washing and bandaging with steady fingers. Arthur was carrying hot water and obeying orders, a brave and dutiful lad, and the cabin steward revolved at her bidding as an untiring satellite. In the background hovered Miss Hester Penfold, distraught, but eager to be of service.

Fleming looked about for Ogden Haight, whose shoulder was swathed in bandages. His eyes were closed, and his face was so pale that the captain asked abruptly: 'Do you know how badly he was hurt?'

'He has lost a great deal of blood,' Angela answered, 'but I think he will recover. It was a cruel gash, which ought to be stitched at once. Will you help me do it?'

'I am handy with a sail-needle. Let me undertake to sew him up. Thank God, that you did not stop a stray bullet.'

Their meeting was no more dramatic than this, for neither felt in a mood for heroics, and after all they were ballasted

with that saving quality of common sense that steadies and stiffens when the need is great. Coolly and deftly Fleming plied the needle as if he were patching a bit of torn canvas. He had seen a deal of rough surgery in the hard school of the deep-water merchant service and inspection of Haight's injury convinced him that with good care there should be no serious aftermath.

'Salt air works wonders,' said he. 'He is better off than in a hospital ashore. I suppose you know that he saved my life. But how about my men? Are any of them in a bad way?'

Angela smiled, slowly, inscrutably, as she replied: 'I suppose you know that Ogden Haight has no love for you. I am wondering why he did it. I saw the whole affair. Your men are doing nicely. All flesh wounds. Their heads were too hard to be broken.'

Fleming hated himself for inwardly begrudging Haight this meed of praise, so generous and so well deserved, but he warmly echoed the tribute and hastened to speak to his men one after another. These honest fellows blushed with pride and made light of their suffering.

The captain went on deck to tell the chief officer: 'Mr. McArthur, as soon as the ship is cleaned up and under way, have the bosun pipe all hands to the starboard gangway. I suppose you have ordered the sailmaker to sew poor Holcomb and Stowell in their canvas shrouds. See that a grating is ready and an American ensign draped over them. I hope with all my heart that I may make as fine an end of it when my time comes.'

'They were first-rate lads, sir, Americans of the old stock, offshore fishermen and sailors for a hundred years. Both of them single men out of Gloucester and Portsmouth. They did their duty and there must be fair weather for them beyond.'

The mate coughed and walked away with downcast head. The dead had been shipmates of his in the close-knit *camaraderie* of the forecastle. It occurred to him to turn and inquire: 'I didn't wait for orders about the schooner's men — the corpses, I mean. They were weighted and shoved over the side at once, sir. They couldn't be left lying about. I held Captain Doane's body, however, to hear what you had to say.'

'I am glad of that, Mr. McArthur. He will be buried from the ship, not with our men, but afterward. He was a shipmaster and a very able one, and after all he was an American, and it wouldn't have seemed quite decent to heave him over with that Chinese and Portuguese scum. He was born in the wrong century. In the days of Morgan or Blackbeard or Kidd, his talents would have found plenty of sea-room.'

'Let him settle his scores with his Maker,' said the mate.

Later in the day the boatswain's pipe sounded its trilling reiteration and the crew mustered in silence beside the flag-covered grating at the gangway. Several of them bore the marks of the morning's fight, here a head wound round with a handkerchief, there a hand criss-crossed with plaster. Captain Fleming stood in front of them, his face clouded with sadness as he read from the prayer-book the noble service that begins:

> I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

At length he looked up from the book, waited a moment, and Angela Breck stepped forward from beside Miss Penfold. Sweet and low and vibrant, her voice floated out over the opalescent ocean,

> Oh, Lord, be with us when we sail
> Upon the lonely deep,

Our guard, when on the silent deck
The nightly watch we keep.

The tune was an old familiar one, and one seaman after another picked it up, even though he knew not the words by heart, until a chorus of deep-throated, reverent voices rolled out the refrain, through to the concluding lines:

Across this troubled tide of life
Thyself our pilot be,
Until we reach that better land,
The land that knows no sea.

Fleming made a slight gesture and the first and second mates moved to the head of the grating. Then the captain read the prayer to be used at the burial of the dead at sea, beginning:

We therefore commit these bodies to the deep, looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose second coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the sea shall give up her dead.

The starry ensign was withdrawn from the shrouded figures, the grating was tilted upward, and the two brave sailors of the Nautilus plunged into the unfathomable sea to join that vast multitude of mariners who have held their lives in small esteem when duty beckoned. The crew returned to their stations, the ship filled away on her course toward Sunda Straits, and in her wake, at the end of a trailing hawser, yawed the pirate schooner with her dejected captives.

Through the evening of this day the quarterdeck of the Nautilus was unusually silent. Miss Penfold felt so overpowering a sense of unreality that it smothered speech. The events crowded within twenty-four hours seemed incredible until she glanced astern and saw the dark mass of the schooner or heard the sing-song cry of the armed guard whenever the half-hour was struck, 'All's well on board the

Wanderer, sir.' And she had only to close her eyes to see, in the most vivid, startling, panoramic fashion, that which she had not believed could actually happen in this the twentieth century. She had stood upon the quarterdeck of her own ship, she an elderly spinster of the modern Stonehaven, and beheld her own crew in the headlong assault and clash of a boarding-party wielding pike and cutlass. It was precisely as if some old painting had become alive. So extraordinarily exact was the verisimilitude in every detail of the engagement that no wonder she was uncertain of her own identity. Either she had suddenly become the bodily reincarnation of her grandmother, or she had been whisked back through a hundred years of time. One thing was certain, however, that she would indulge in no more foolish prattle about desiring the excitements of an 'old-fashioned voyage.'

She grieved for her dead like Rachel mourning for her children, and Fleming, who was drifting restlessly across the deck and back again, heard her sigh so sorrowfully that he halted to say: 'There should be no sighing on board tonight. We ought to be full of thanksgiving for a most merciful deliverance. Are you blaming yourself for what it cost us?'

'I cannot help thinking about Holcomb and Stowell,' she replied. 'They did not expect to fight pirates. And perhaps there are sweethearts and mothers and sisters at home. I shall go to see every one of them and if pensions are needed — that is, whatever money can do — '

'Every sailor expects to encounter the perils of the sea, Miss Hester. His calling is a dangerous one at best. Think of those poor fellows you found dead in Captain Doane's boat. And the other boats that put off from the Ticonderoga may never be heard of again. At this very moment somewhere at sea ships are going down, and men are

clinging to spars or being dashed against lee shores, or drifting miserably and dying by inches.'

'What a Job's comforter you are!' exclaimed Miss Penfold with a trifle more spirit.

'Not a bit of it. Far more people die in their beds than at sea, and there never was a sailor who didn't feel safer afloat than ashore. Why, my hair stands on end whenever I try to cross a crowded street in New York or Boston. Give me a well-found ship and a comfortable offing. And there are two ways of looking at the loss of our two men. Badly as I feel about it — and I couldn't feel much worse — there is no doubt that they have made your voyage worth while, whether we win back your fortune or not. Our country expects that kind of thing of its navy, but it takes for granted that there are no more American merchant seamen afloat. Why, the story of Holcomb and Stowell will ring like a bugle-call from the Atlantic to the Pacific. I tell you, Miss Hester, they will not have to wait until the sea gives up its dead before they live again.'

Greatly comforted, she thanked him and again became absorbed in her own reflections, although they were less unhappy than before. Meanwhile, Angela, having given her wounded in care of the steward and Arthur until morning, was seeking rest on the divan in her stateroom before going on deck for a breath of the cool night air. Her thoughts were colored by fanciful doubts that things could have happened as she had beheld them with her own eyes, yet this feeling of illusion was by no means so compelling as that which had enwrapped Miss Penfold. Stephen Fleming was too real to play a part in any kind of hallucination. Angela had seen him lead his men to the schooner's deck, had watched him cut his way toward the terrifying figure of Reuben Doane, had felt her heart cease to beat as the two sought to slay each other, had breathed an incohe-

rent prayer of joyous thanksgiving when the hoary old villain fell and Fleming, unharmed, rejoined his victorious comrades. Thus had her own great-grandfather, Jonathan Breck, in the flush of his own bold and romantic youth, led his privateersmen when the yards were interlocked and the half-naked gunners, Yankee against British, laid their broadside batteries muzzle to muzzle and the splintered, shattered hulls ground side by side.

Somewhere, in the jostling, humdrum, tired world beyond the ocean rim, people were running about in automobiles, flocking to theaters, feverishly seeking some new thing to make life worth living. Poor, foolish, jaded, they were to be pitied, those puppets whose world seemed so shadowy and forlorn. Angela Breck had learned the joy of living when the world was young, and for her naught else existed than a ship upon the seas and the rude and splendid reincarnation of days that are no more.

And what of Ogden Haight, gentleman adventurer, he of the soft and idle life, whose most strenuous engagements had been fought out on the golf links, the tennis court, and the ballroom floor, whose tailor and haberdasher had been figures of importance in his world of action, and whose stormiest passages at arms had been with his chauffeur? His behavior as one of the boarding-party had been ardently heroic, distinguished by the purple patch of reckless self-sacrifice for another that wins men the Victoria Cross. Stephen Fleming had done his duty, the thing expected of him, but Haight had done more than this. Admiration and gratitude for having saved the life of Stephen Fleming were not precisely the emotions he longed to inspire in the heart of Angela Breck. And could he have known it, the truth would have been no great consolation to poor Haight, with his aching, throbbing shoulder and his pulse jumping with fever.

As for Fleming, he was, in truth, a laggard wooer, though not from choice. Miss Penfold still dwelt in a world of dreams, but his had been a rude and troubled awakening. The affair with the Wanderer had found him prepared to grapple with the unexpected as befitted a capable ship-master, and he had played his part, as a piece of the day's work, without blustering or bungling. But the realization of what might have happened made him cold. Until this day he had been playing a joyous game, careless of the odds, sobered by his responsibilities, it is true, but unshaken in the confidence of Youth. But what if he had been whipped in the fight with the schooner? And what other hazards might be waiting to ambush this fantastic voyage? The game was by no means won. His vision had been cleared of the mist of romance, and he understood what it meant to have not only the fortunes, but also the lives, of Angela Breck and Miss Penfold in his keeping.

What right had he to think of love until he had followed duty to the journey's end? There was no passing this barrier. It stood between him and Angela, and, while he had hitherto recognized something of the kind, it might have been brushed aside under provocation. Now, however, it was as if this impalpable obstruction had become a wall of steel bars. Boyish as he was in many respects, the sea had toughened the fibers of his manliness. In learning how to discipline others with an iron hand, he had learned to discipline himself. God willing, he hoped that Angela might be a sailor's sweetheart, but the time had not yet come.

He was walking the deck, glancing frequently at the schooner astern, his thoughts veering to the problem of getting rid of her and her imprisoned crew, when Arthur announced, 'If you please, Captain Fleming, you're wanted below. Ogden Haight is pretty restless and is anxious to see

you. I think he will be a good deal easier if you jolly him along a little.'

'Why, certainly. I have been eager to thank him for what he did for me, but I thought he ought not to be disturbed before morning.'

Haight was in his own room, the steward sitting beside his berth and pulling to and fro an improvised punkah which carried a cool current of air from the nearest skylight. Haight's eyes were bright and his cheek flushed as he smiled whimsically at Fleming and said: 'I fancy you wonder why I pushed myself into your private quarrel with the late Captain Reuben Doane.'

The other man gripped his hand and replied most earnestly: 'If you hadn't, it would have been a stitched hammock and a wet grave for me. A favor like that is too big for a mere "thank you." I feel very bad about your being hurt. I would gladly break the voyage to find you a doctor sooner, but Batavia is the nearest port. Yes, I was honestly surprised that you should do a thing like that for me. You have never been any too fond of me.'

'As fond as you have been of me,' returned Haight. 'To be strictly honest with you, it was not altogether affectionate regard that put me up to the deed. For one thing, this ship needed you.'

'Straight from the shoulder!' cried Fleming, not in the least offended. 'Nothing selfish in your confession so far. You were thinking of Miss Penfold's interests there.'

'Maybe so, Miss Penfold's and — and another's. But there was a distinctly selfish motive and I imagine that it was the ruling one, though a chap really had no time to think things out.'

Haight paused, looked at Fleming with an expression of considerable enjoyment, and went on to say: 'You have been most infernally in my way, from start to finish. There

is a matter between us which should have been threshed out some time ago, but I yielded to expediency, for the sake of the Penfold adventure. I dealt with marked cards, I cheated at the game you and I are playing, and I am quite sure that I saved your life this morning in order to square the account. I staked and lost my self-respect, you see, and now I have won it back. I have tied your hands, and you can't very well have a row with me.'

'I don't in the least understand what you mean,' said Fleming, frowning in his perplexity. 'Hadn't you better let this matter rest, whatever it may be, until you feel a bit stronger? Good Heavens, man, there can be no talk of squaring accounts on your part! The debt is all mine, and I shall never live long enough to repay it.'

'As I say, you can't hit a man when he is down,' returned Haight. 'So I intend to 'fess up, and then it is for you to decide how the balance sheet stands between us. Not to bore you with any maudlin stuff about temptation and repentance and all that, I tell you that I found out, on my own hook, that you had not run away from Stonehaven, and that you had sacrificed yourself to pull Arthur Breck out of his scrape. Yes, I knew it no more than a few days after you sailed in the Ticonderoga with that unlamented old hellion, Reuben Doane.'

'And you never told Miss Penfold, you never told Angela Breck!' exclaimed Fleming, not very angrily, rather in tones of sorrow and regret. 'You let them hold such a miserably unjust opinion of me? Supposing that I had been lost at sea? What then? Would you have kept still?'

'I did not keep still, Fleming. When Reuben Doane brought the word that you had been drowned, I owned up to Angela and to her aunt. Give me credit for that. I was most damnably ashamed of myself, and it was no small punishment to stay in this ship and be despised and hated

for wronging you. It helped to make more of a man of me, however, and I shut my teeth hard and stuck to my job and tried to save the voyage from going to smash. I wanted to have it out with you in Capetown and quit the ship then and there, but Miss Penfold made me see the other side of the problem.'

For some time Fleming sat silent, his chin in his hand, until a humorous and sympathetic comprehension banished all his hostility. Haight had set him on a lee shore, as it were, and he was helpless to resent or disapprove. Matters were squared with a vengeance, hardly squared, for the balance was heavily against Fleming. He looked Haight straight in the eye and his smile was candid and friendly as he said:

'Bygones are bygones with me. If I had known all this sooner, it would have been a case of boarding-pikes and cutlasses between us. But whatever damage you did me has been outlawed, and forgotten by all hands. So you feel better now that the sky is all clear?'

'Oh, I should have had to tell you sooner or later. Luck turned my way this morning. Most theatrical, wasn't it? So now we start even, a fair field and no favor?'

'U-m-m, a fair field and no favor? Now what the deuce do you mean by that? Oh, I understand' — and Fleming blushed. 'So that is what you have been hiding in the back of your head. I am slow-witted, no mistake. You wanted to put yourself right with me, but you had a good deal more interest in mending your reputation in another quarter. Well, it will be a fight in the open, and may the better man win. And, by George, taking it by and large, it strikes me that you have shown yourself the all-round better man this day.'

'I must be very light-headed and flighty, indeed, to think you really said it,' chuckled Haight. 'Calling me the bet-

ter man! Pshaw, I'd better quit talking and try to sleep. Here's to her, God bless her, and success to the Penfold adventure.'

'So say I, and I think there is no chance of our hating each other again. Good night to you. Hope I have not tired you.'

'I feel a hundred per cent better for having it out with you,' was Haight's cheery farewell, with which he dropped off to sleep, pulse and temperature almost normal. Fleming went to find the mate, Mr. McArthur, and they stood at the taffrail for a long time, discussing the schooner which, dim and spectral, followed after the ship in a shifting, sparkling streak of phosphorescent foam.

'I want to be rid of her,' said the captain. 'Look at her. She gives me an uneasy, spooky feeling, as if the ghost of Reuben Doane might be at her helm, keeping steadily on in pursuit of us. Yet I have no right to turn those cutthroats adrift. They deserve punishment, every man of them, but I can't take them aboard here. And if it comes on to blow, I must cut the schooner adrift.'

'Why not try to tow her within a hundred miles or so of the coast, put them in their boats, and burn the schooner?' suggested the mate. 'They would most likely fetch up against Java or Sumatra, and, if we warn the Dutch Government at Batavia, the rogues will be laid by the heels. I hate to lose the vessel. She is worth good prize-money if we can get her to port.'

'That means no end of red-tape and official inquiries and costly delay!' objected the captain. 'This is not an armed ship of war, and, while we are within our rights in defending ourselves, I doubt if we are entitled to capture prizes at sea. I presume that the Wanderer flies the British flag when she is about her lawful business. No, there is no profit for us in hanging to the infernal craft.'

'This is an old-fashioned voyage, sir. Why not spread-eagle every mother's son of 'em, give him six dozen on the bare back with a cat-o'-nine tails pickled in brine and well knotted. Then keel-haul him and chuck him back into his condemned schooner and cast her off to go to the devil where she belongs.'

'A most excellent idea,' laughed Fleming, 'but it would be rather unpleasant for the ladies. I think they have had enough of rough work for a while. How about the schooner's wounded men? Have you done what you could for them to-night?'

'Yes, sir. Two died this afternoon, and a couple more will be hunting Davy Jones's locker before daylight. Surgeons couldn't have saved them. Those boarding-pikes let a man's soul out if they get a fair thrust at him. Two men are aboard here, a Malay and an Englishman, the last a deserter from a cruiser in Table Bay. He claims that he was buncoed into joining the schooner, and he's a straight-spoken, husky lad that will help out in my watch when he gets on his pins. The others are doing well enough where they are.'

'I can't spare a guard much longer,' said Fleming. 'We are short-handed, and need every able-bodied man. I rather think all the piracy has been knocked out of them since Reuben Doane died. This Matt Weaver may be a first-class smuggler, but he is a poor stick at fighting. And they are mighty short of men. I tell you what: while we are jogging along to-night with this four-knot breeze, better heave-to, take half a dozen good hands, and board the schooner. Make a thorough search for weapons of every kind and bring them to the ship. Then haul the prisoners on deck one at a time, and carry out your suggestion of flogging them if you like. I'll not interfere. And at daylight we will cast the schooner off, and I hope she may founder.'

The mate looked pleased, but his mind was not wholly easy. 'It does seem a sin to lose that prize-money,' quoth he. 'We'd split up as much as five hundred dollars a man if that tidy little vessel was condemned and knocked down at public sale.'

'If you men will work this ship out and home again, Mr. McArthur, I'll promise you a five-hundred-dollar bonus all round.'

'Right you are, sir. I take back what I said, if you please. It wasn't meant in earnest. There's not a man on board that won't chuck his wages into Miss Penfold's lap if she needs 'em. And of course we have plenty to keep us busy without leading a pirate schooner around on the end of a string like a pet pup. We've downed the Jonah. Now we're bound to win.'

CHAPTER XII

A LEE SHORE

For several days thereafter the weather continued fair but very hot and languorous, the monsoon blowing fitfully with tedious patches of calm. Captain Fleming became anxious and impatient, for the latter stretch of the voyage across the Indian Ocean had dragged interminably. He was short of men for handling studdingsails and skysail besides the usual spread of canvas, and he wished to take advantage of every shift of the prevailing light airs. The Nautilus had been modeled in an era when American shipbuilders had speed as well as cargo capacity in mind and might have been fairly called one of the early clippers, so fine and sweet were her lines, so graceful her sheer. And although the winds were baffling and fitful, she had somehow made a respectable day's run when the noon observations were worked out by the captain and the mate.

At length there came a morning that dawned hazy and gray, the air heavy with soggy dampness which later turned into a weeping drizzle of rain. After wavering feebly in a series of expiring gasps, the breeze seemed to have been smothered. The clouds had not begun to mass to presage heavy wind, but sea and sky were obscured. Toward noon, there came little sharp gusts of rain blown by vagrant breezes that danced all round the compass. Fleming was suspicious of the symptoms. His barometer was violently disturbed, the needle sinking until it registered an unusually low pressure. He recalled similar premonitions before a ship in which he had sailed before the mast was caught in a typhoon between Shanghai and Manila. The Nautilus was beyond the edge of the typhoon belt,

but a tropical cyclone by any other name was as much to be dreaded.

In the early afternoon, the slaty sky darkened, and the melancholy ocean was troubled by long, windless swells that moved out of the northwest to give warning of the direction from which the weather disturbance might be expected. The Nautilus had traversed the vast reaches of the two Atlantics, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and almost crossed the Indian Ocean with no more than a few severe gales through which she had fought her way without loss of spars or sails. Now, however, an ordeal seemed imminent which her master had prayed in his heart might not befall.

When the storm came, it found the ship stripped of sail to her lower reefed topsails, but so tremendous was the weight of the wind that it thrust her almost upon her beam ends as if she were held down by the pressure of a titanic hand. Thus, helpless and unmanageable, the Nautilus was in sore peril of foundering, but the stoutest canvas could not withstand this terrific strain and one sail after another was blown to pieces, the fragments whirling off to leeward in a smother of flying scud. The laboring ship righted by ever so little, but still refused to pay off and run before the wind. A heavier gust carried away the main topmast and a few seconds later the mizzen topgallant mast went by the board. The seamen who were hacking with axes at the back stays scrambled for shelter through roaring seas that buried them and waited to see whether more spars must be sacrificed.

The foretopsail still held, and inch by inch it pulled the head of the ship away from the trough of the sea until she was once more under command and running off before the wind like a frenzied horse with the bit in its teeth. Captain Fleming tried to ascertain the probable location of the

center or 'calm spot' of this rotary cyclone and to decide upon which tack to heave his ship to, for he dared not run a moment longer than possible, because the ocean, at first beaten flat by the immense velocity of the wind, was rapidly piling up in huge, broken seas. With almost incredible exertion the Nautilus was brought around on the starboard tack, just before the overburdened foretopmast snapped off at the head. She was fairly hove-to, however, and after two storm trysails or spencers had been set, and the tangle of splintered spars and rigging cleared from alongside, the crippled ship was riding out the storm.

The expected shift of wind, sudden and treacherous, which comes at the height of the tropical cyclone was weathered with no more damage, but as the Nautilus drifted off on the other tack, her captain knew that he was being swept toward the lee shore of the coast of Sumatra. He could not hope to haul off and find more sea-room until the storm should pass, and meantime his partly dismasted vessel must obey the will of the wind and current. All but one of the boats had been cut away or smashed to kindling. These cockleshells would be of no use, however, in such an inferno of raging water as this. The one tangible hope lay in the fact that storms of the typhoon order, so near the Equator as this, often blew themselves out in a few hours. Fleming recalled his latest observations of the position of the ship, roughly revised them by means of dead reckoning, and guessed at the probable drift during the next twelve hours.

Once when he went below, haggard and dripping, to find food, Miss Penfold met him in the passageway and begged for tidings. Raising his voice above the clamor without, he told her: 'We have lost all our fine feathers, but we still swim. And that is more than we have any right to expect. If we don't founder or fetch up on the beach, we shall make Batavia.'

'I am not afraid to die,' said she with so much simple dignity that he was profoundly moved. 'But for you, and for Angela — ah you are young —'

'Where is she?' he exclaimed. 'Not that I am ready for any tragic farewells, but, between you and me, I would like a sight of her while the spray is out of my eyes. It is all in the voyage, Miss Hester. We are having more than our share of weather just now, but no stancher, more seaworthy vessel ever floated than this same old Nautilus. Why, this reminds me of what Bucko McCann and Williams and I went through in navigating the Ticonderoga. And we didn't let her sink under our feet, did we?'

Clawing his way into the reeling saloon, he found Angela, white and weary, trying to make the wounded seamen more comfortable. While it braced his courage to see her, yet the regret tortured him that he should have brought her to this extremity of danger. As she turned from tucking a pillow under the head of a man whose face was decorated with strips of plaster, he shouted a cheery greeting. The table was between them and he dared not tarry to work his way around to her side. With a long pull at a pitcher of cold coffee, he snatched a fistful of sandwiches from a plate in the rack and jumped for the deck.

'If I stayed there about one minute longer,' he muttered, 'I'd be picking her up in my arms, whether she liked it or not, and letting the ship go hang while I tried to comfort her. There was never a man alive that fought for a stake like mine.'

As for lonely, anxious Angela, she held fast to the table with one hand. The ship might go to the bottom at any minute for all she knew. She might never see Stephen Fleming again. He had left her with no more than a smile and a wave of the hand, and he could bolt sandwiches like a hungry wolf in such an agonizing crisis as this!

Daylight came torn and tattered and gray, and the Nautilus still wallowed and plunged bows under, drifting steadily nearer the coast. Toward noon the violence of the hurricane somewhat abated, and the horizon slowly receded as the sky became lighter. Misty, vague, far-distant, yet not to be mistaken for a low-hanging cloudbank, Fleming discerned the outline of the great Sumatra mountain range of Bukit Barissan.

'Do you happen to know anything about this coast?' he bawled in the mate's ear. 'If it comes to it, we want to look for the softest place to beach her.'

Dick Mott was at the wheel and the query was blown past him. Holding the kicking spokes with one hand, he beckoned the captain and told him: 'You know that Malay I hauled aboard from the schooner? I had knocked him out with my slungshot. Well, he's a Sumatra lad. Maybe he knows this coast. Better get wise to him, sir.'

With a grateful nod, Fleming started for the forecastle, more than once washed off his feet and rolled into the streaming scuppers. Cautiously shoving back the scuttle and leaping inside between combers, he found the bunk of Dick Mott's prisoner of war and roughly shook him. The Malay raised his bandaged head and glared at the disturber, fluently cursing him in his own tongue.

'You speak English, Johnny?' asked the skipper.

'Yes, sar, I speak it very well. I have been four years in Capetown jail and it was a very good school.'

'Are you from Sumatra?'

'Yes, sar, I was a fisherman, from Karang.'

'That is on the south coast, to the northeast'ard of here,' exclaimed Fleming. 'Here, you rascal. You are coming aft with me. I want you to con this ship. She's drifting ashore, understand?'

The brown-skinned Mohammedan gazed calmly at the

speaker and replied indifferently: 'Allah is good. I will try to save the ship. I have a woman and four children in Karang.'

Two seamen who had flung themselves into their bunks, wet clothes and all, picked up the mattress with the Malay upon it, lashed him fast, and hoisted him on deck. The wind and waves caught half of them as they floundered aft with their burden, which was tossed about like a football. Gasping and coughing, the Malay was hauled up the poop-ladder, unlashed, and propped in the lee of the deckhouse, more dead than alive.

'Fetch him a stiff drink of rum,' said Fleming. 'He is pirate enough to toss it off, I'll gamble on that.'

Presently the Malay revived, waved a long muscular arm toward the misty, somber coast, and cried out that he knew every peak and spur of the green-clad mountains which rose so grandly from the sea.

'All rocks. The ship will smash damn quick,' said he.

'Any bays or rivers we can try to head for?'

The pilot stared long at the frowning coast, fixed his eyes on a scarred and gullied ridge partly obscured by wreathing vapor, and smote his hands together as he exclaimed: 'One place, maybe. There is a river, a little one, with very good anchorage inside the bar. How much water you draw, sar?'

'Eighteen feet aft.'

'You will get over the bar if the tide is high, but you will strike bottom inside, I think. It is sheltered, tho', and the ship will be safe.'

'I doubt if we can clear the headlands this side,' Fleming muttered, 'but we'll try for it. There is nothing else to do.'

Through rifting clouds the sun shone wan and blurred. To landward could be seen a sea-washed rampart of cliffs rising from a dazzling streak of surf; beyond them a dark

green expanse of stately forests and in the background the verdure-clad ridges and jutting peaks of the mountain range. It was a coast against which the stoutest ship would be torn to fragments in any but the calmest weather.

'Have you found your landmarks?' Fleming spoke again to the Malay. 'Can you make out any break in the surf?'

'I, Batu Pang, have found them, sar.' His dark, mobile face showed alert intelligence, and he explained more rapidly, his hands weaving to and fro in eloquent gesticulation: 'That red streak on the mountain, like rusty chain cable, it is the sign. You must run straight for that. Keep to leeward of the little islands.'

'All hands stand by to wear ship!' shouted the Captain.

Extraordinarily delicate and dangerous was the maneuver, the ship being so nearly dismasted and the seas running so high. Canvas had to be set to drive her ahead of the following waves, and, realizing that the time had passed for prudence, Fleming told the mate to carry whatever sails had not been blown away. Yawing, fighting for her head, lifting dizzily or booming down the long, frothing hollows with the seas thundering high above her taffrail, the ship fled toward the coast, three men at her wheel, the captain standing close beside them.

Obedient to his word, they held to the course that seemed to be driving straight on to destruction. At Fleming's elbow crouched Batu Pang, speaking when new landmarks opened up or his quick eye caught the flash of broken water along a hidden reef. They were able to see a tiny ribbon of beach, and a patch of indigo water where the surf was not spouting, but it was by no means certain that the ship could be handled to escape the long arm of the cliffs to leeward of this refuge. The captain dared not leave his station with the pilot and the helmsmen, for his was the master mind that dominated the situation. Therefore he called to the

mate: 'Time to get all hands on deck, Mr. McArthur. It will be touch and go before long. Life-belts will be of little account if we miss the mouth of that river yonder, but see that all the cabin people have them on.'

The 'cabin people' made no scene of panic. Such of the wounded seamen as could stand on their feet displayed dogged, uncomplaining courage and forgot their own sufferings in helping carry their comrades into the open air, for it was abhorrent to think of any one being left imprisoned and forsaken below. Ogden Haight was still weak, but once on deck he insisted that it was nonsense for the others to bother their heads about him. Angela and Miss Penfold clung to the handrail of the cabin roof, a bight of line passed around them lest one of the giant seas that thundered astern might overtake the fleeing ship. Against the background of the tempestuous ocean, the lithe, swinging figure of Angela Breck was outlined. Sweeping her wind-blown hair from her eyes, this daughter of a viking race steadfastly confronted the issue of this superb battle between the wit and courage of men and the deadly peril of a lee shore.

Stephen Fleming stole yearning, troubled glances at her, but he was resolved not to quit his post for an instant until the ship found a haven or struck the cliffs. His ears were closed to everything but the voice of Batu Pang, and his eyes could not lose sight of that ribbon of beach and the patch of quieter water flanked by the far-flung squadrons of breakers. Shoving one of the men aside, he took his place at the wheel, futilely impatient with the ship which was sagging off to leeward and drawing nearer and nearer the outermost fragments of cliff. In order to avoid the leeward reefs and islands, the Nautilus had been close-hauled after running before the wind for some time, and this last stretch of her journey was a desperate fight to work offshore under the remnants of her canvas.

'If the ship can live one half-hour more, I swear to be the most honest fisherman that ever sailed out of Karang,' piously muttered Batu Pang as he looked aside at the black rampart of rock no more than a few hundred feet from the indomitable vessel. She was drawing ahead almost imperceptibly, yet every wave seemed to lift and send her drifting a trifle nearer destruction. The promontory round which she must win her way was so close aboard that the harbor could no longer be seen. Nothing more could be done except to watch and wait and pray. The ship seemed sentient, as if she were making this last effort without man's guidance, as if she staggered on with no thought of surrender to the elements which she had conquered through one generation of men after another.

The crucial moment came when the clamorous breakers reared right alongside and their spray was dashed back across the deck. The ship's planking grazed a jutting fragment of rock, then a white-crested comber flung her past it, and with a thrilling quickening of vitality, no longer sluggish and inert, she plunged round the end of the promontory, paid off to head straight for the mouth of the river, and reeled in a wild, jubilant dance toward the break in the bar.

'Almost high tide!' exclaimed the Malay. 'We may bump the bar, but I think she will keep on going.'

Soon the channel was discernible, a narrow, sinuous line marked by green water, and, guided by the fluent exhortations of Batu Pang, the ship went surging past the last outlying reef, and upon the foaming bar. Once, twice, she struck with a jarring thump, lifted on the back of the next roller, and sped boiling into the wider reaches of the almost landlocked bay. The water became smoother until the Nautilus swung behind a sheltering point and was about to let go anchor when her keel ripped along the bottom, head-

way was abruptly checked, and she grounded as solidly and comfortably as a house.

'Safe but stranded,' said Fleming as his cramped fingers let go the wheel and he walked heavily to the side, wiping the sweat from his eyes. 'Hard and fast at high water, and probably leaking, by the way we hit that bar. Well, Batu Pang, it is not your fault. You were the one man in a million.'

The Malay had curled up on his mattress, his bandaged head pillowed upon his arm, as if physical weakness had overcome him. Fleming saw to it that the pirate was carried below, and then the most unreasonable and ungrateful young shipmaster, instead of joining the jubilee of thanksgiving which rang from one end of the ship to the other, spoke a few gruff orders to the mate, and stood, inert, frowning, and unhappy. Angela waited, expecting him to say something to her, but he was so manifestly wrapped in his own meditations that she retreated from the deck, puzzled and disappointed.

Miss Penfold advanced, however, and gently inquired, her hand on Fleming's arm: 'Was the strain too great for you? Why do you look so sad and worried? Why, my heart is singing for joy that our lives were so wonderfully given back to us. And we are all so proud of you.'

'Oh, I am thankful enough. A ship never had a closer shave, and had it not been for the Malay there would not be enough of the Nautilus left to make souvenirs. But look what has happened to the Penfold adventure! I am afraid the ship may never float again. We can lighten her of cargo, but the rascally Malays ashore will steal every pound of stuff we land. They will be swarming around us by to-morrow.'

'You are not like yourself,' she chided. 'This is absurd. I am not in the least discouraged. Thus far the voyage has

been so precisely like one of my grandfather's that it is fairly uncanny. He, too, was cast away upon the coast of Sumatra. And he amassed a very handsome fortune, nevertheless.'

'But you have no more than a pittance of insurance,' returned the downcast skipper.

'Yes, I remember that Ogden Haight told me something of the kind. The underwriters considered us a bad risk. So very foolish of them,' was her serene comment. 'They called the voyage unsound and dangerous, or something of the sort. However, the Penfolds used to carry their own insurance.'

'But they had whole fleets of ships afloat, Miss Hester. All our eggs are in one basket. But this is sorry kind of talk. I'll be as cheerful as you like and we will turn to and see what can be done.'

'You will oblige me by setting your wits to work and extricating us, just as you did at Capetown and later when the pirates attacked us,' was the command of the owner of the Nautilus. 'What will Angela think of such a melancholy hero?'

'That's partly what made me slump down just now,' he ruefully confessed. 'She is farther away from me than ever. The ship and I are stranded together.'

'I did not know that you could be so trying, Stephen Fleming. Do you expect poor Angela to fling herself at your head? Do you suppose she cares whether or not you win my fortune back?'

Fleming was very shamefaced as he proceeded to berate himself for a whimpering fool and rallied from the beaten mood that had quite naturally followed the violent ordeal to which he had been subjected. It was reaction, pure and simple, such as the bravest shipmaster feels when, despite his every exertion, his vessel no longer floats. Before trying

to save the Nautilus and her cargo, all possible precautions must be undertaken against plundering natives, afloat and ashore.

First Fleming interviewed Batu Pang, who murmured weakly: 'You hang me to-morrow, I suppose. I will write good-bye to my woman and children in Karang, if you please, sir.'

'Why in thunder should I hang you?'

'You expected to hand me over to the Dutch' — and the Malay drew a hand across his throat. 'If you can't go to Batavia you will do the job yourself, sar?'

'Oh, bosh, after you kept my ship off the rocks? I am in your debt now. You are a pardoned pirate, absolved, forgiven, anything else you like.'

'I hoped — but I was not sure,' said Batu Pang, with a smile which made his grim features pleasant to see. 'We are brothers, you and me.'

'Glad to hear it. Young Dick Mott's slungshot did for both of us. We have that bond between us. I shall need you to interpret for me. Better stay aboard for the present. You won't be fit to travel until your head is fairly well healed.'

'As long as you need me, I am your friend,' was the grave affirmation. 'The people on this coast are not my people, but I have plenty friends in Karang.'

All hands were too utterly exhausted to begin work before the next day. The night came down, soft and luminous, and an armed watch was set, but Fleming and the mates had to kick and cuff the men awake as they made their vigilant rounds. Beyond the bar the surf still shouted uproariously, but in the river there was little wind and the still black water mirrored the stars as jewels gleam on velvet. From the land came the tang of wood smoke and the earthy smell of damp, lush jungles and the odors of

strange tropical flowers. Now and then a current of warm, heavy air from the forests more remote from the sea brought whiffs of spicy fragrance. The dense foliage overhanging the river-banks was vocal with cries and squeaks, of bats, and lemurs, and flying-foxes, and once there came to the Nautilus the rumbling whine of a tiger. Fires twinkled here and there in the hills, and the faint echo of human voices came from the bamboo huts of fishermen that fringed the upper reaches of the river. During the night many canoes slipped past the ship like shadows, the soft lap, lap of their paddles warning the crew to be alert.

Miss Penfold had been so buffeted about by the storm and so racked by cruel anxieties that she was too weary to comprehend this vastly romantic environment and went early to bed, while Angela, young and vigorous as she was, yielded to a heavy-lidded drowsiness that banished her own dazed conjectures of what might be the next event on the programme of this voyage. Fleming had to stave off sleep by continually bestirring himself on deck through the night, which passed without alarms, although once he ran forward, thinking he heard a boat scrape alongside and a low hum of voices. There was nothing to be seen, however, and he had a sense of profound relief when daylight came to this remote inlet of a strange and barbarous coast. The ship was still fast aground, an ominous sign, for the storm must have driven an uncommonly high tide over the bar, and if she could not be floated at once the receding flood of water would leave her more firmly stranded than ever.

'It looks as if our port might be the poorhouse and the Penfold house-flag is about due to fly at half-mast,' pensively reflected the skipper when Arthur Breck piped up at his elbow:

'Dick says these Malay pirates are bad medicine. He got me so excited that I couldn't sleep a wink. He says that

when a ship goes ashore in these waters the natives always massacre every living soul with their barongs and krises and then loot and burn the vessel. A stranded sailing ship is just their meat, Dick says. How about it?'

'You stop your croaking and report to your sister for orders,' said Fleming. 'Haven't you and Dick had enough excitement for one voyage?'

'Great Scot, we have not overlooked a single bet,' exclaimed the youth, 'from pirates to typhoons and shipwreck. The only thing that worries me is that every one will call me a liar when I get home.'

The captain picked him up bodily by the slack of his garments and dropped him down the companionway under threat of marooning if he did not promptly forget the pessimistic views of young Mr. Mott. Hourly soundings had been made of the water in the hold, and, while the ship was leaking, her timbers had held together wonderfully well and a daily spell of pumping would suffice to hold the inflow in check. It was plain to see, however, that she could not be hauled off the bottom until much of the cargo should have been removed. For this task the crew had no adequate supply of boats to convey the merchandise to the beach. And to dump this precious merchandise overboard was a tragedy to be considered only as a last resort.

Fleming was considerably disturbed to discover that Batu Pang had vanished overnight. Apparently he had been too weak to crawl from his bunk, but he must have stolen on deck and hailed a passing canoe while the lookout slept. The desertion indicated treachery, the Malay must have been shamming, and Fleming feared that he had gone away to muster the predatory fishermen of his own coast. Malay friendship and gratitude were proverbially uncertain, and it seemed likely that Batu Pang had not forgiven his captor.

The crew had a vast amount of work in hand before the problem of salvage could be attacked. Sails and rigging had to be overhauled and put in as good order as was possible and the wreckage cleared away below and aloft. The day was not far spent when there appeared to seaward several low, graceful proas, their triangular sails of matting skimming along the skyline like great brown birds. Instead of passing the bar, they converged toward the channel, standing on and off as if curiously observant but wary of approach. They were full of turbaned, half-clad men, perhaps peaceably desirous of assisting the stranded ship, but more likely reconnoitering to discover whether she were capable of defending herself.

'Batu Pang must have signaled his friends in a hurry,' thought Fleming as he watched the proas through his glasses. 'As far as I can make out from my books and charts, this part of Sumatra is an independent native kingdom, Tomba by name, in which the Dutch have very little to say. So I suppose these buccaneering Johnnies yonder do about as they please. Well, we shall have to sit tight and wait for them to open the ball.'

The four brass six-pounders were shifted to sweep the channel, and once more the skipper and his crew blessed the memory of Captain Andrew Claghorn, who had unearthed this make-believe armament for the sake of pleasing Miss Hester Penfold.

After consulting his manifests, Ogden Haight, who reported himself as fit for duty as captain's clerk, cheerily announced: 'There are fifty boxes of chisels in the cargo. Why not cram a peck or two of them down each cannon? I'll bet you a new hat it's the quickest and surest way of introducing Yankee chisels among the natives of Sumatra.'

'Find your chisels,' said Fleming with a grin. 'We

brought this cargo for trade and a few samples may hit them right between the eyes.'

The flotilla of proas continued to hover off the bar in short tacks or long, wheeling flights, as if waiting for reënforcements. From the gay dots of villages clinging to the hillsides the natives could be seen filing along the trails that gashed the forest in wavering, threadlike lines. They came toward the shore and gathered along the beach, chattering excitedly, pointing at the ship, but showing no hostile intent. No canoes came off to hail the Nautilus, at which Fleming was surprised and said to Miss Penfold:

'I think I can strike some kind of a bargain with the people ashore to help lighten the ship if we can stand off the proas. The villagers behave as if they had received orders to let us alone. And apparently they are not acting in any agreement with the fellows outside the bar.'

'If we could send a boat to the nearest Dutch settlement with a message,' she suggested. 'But I presume you have thought of that.'

'Those proas have us bottled up just at present,' said he. 'There will be another very high tide ten days from now, at the full of the moon. If we can stick it out till then, and meanwhile get some of the cargo out of the ship, we may be able to kedge her off. It is a good working possibility!'

Late in the afternoon, as if by preconcerted arrangement, the proas began moving in toward the bar. The breeze was blowing fair for them, and they sped like hawks. Captain Fleming sent his crew to quarters, and although his demeanor was unruffled his heart was in his throat. This was a far more ticklish situation than he had ever been called on to face. By comparison the fight with the Wanderer had been no more than a skirmish. The sunlight winked on the weapons of the men who were crowding for-

ward into the bows of the proas as if making ready to board the ship like a torrent.

While Fleming grimly surveyed this Malay fleet, a rosy pleasant-visaged seaman came limping aft and said respectfully, as he touched his hat: 'Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I'm the man that was taken out of the Wanderer. The first mate said he'd put in a good word for me, sir. I wasn't no bony-fide, regular signed pirate, sir. I was told she was sailin' on some kind of a smugglin' lay.'

'Well, what is it? Speak lively!' snapped Fleming.

'My name is Harris, sir. I deserted from H.M.S. Vigilant in Table Bay. I was a gunner's mate, if you please, and I'd like a chance to handle one of those cross-eyed, old brass pieces, sir.'

'You must be the man that raked us with that one-pounder. All right, Harris, take your choice, and if ever you shot straight now is your time.'

The gunner's mate jumped for the nearest six-pounder, swore a round of rolling British oaths at the antiquated specimen of ordnance, and trained it upon the foremost proa which was dashing through the narrow channel, her sails spread wing and wing. The hostile flotilla was forced to enter in single file to avoid the shoals on either hand, and the obvious intention was to make straight for the Nautilus, lay her alongside one after the other, and fairly smother her under a press of numbers.

The British renegade had the strategic mind of an admiral. The other cannoneers fired in wild haste, and the screaming volleys of chisels flew across the crowded decks of the proas, cutting up the crews in bloody fashion, but failing to demoralize the formation. Another broadside struck down the helmsman of the nearest proa and the tiller swinging over, she jibbed and veered almost athwart the channel. For a moment the whole side of her was ex-

posed, and Harris, the gunner's mate, saw his opportunity. Depressing the muzzle of his piece, he aimed at the proa's water-line and let fly. On top of his double-shotted load of chisels, he had poked a crowbar, a dipsey lead, and all the iron belaying-pins he could snatch from the nearest pin-rail.

His eye was as sure as his brain had been quick, and, moreover, he was shooting from a stationary gun-platform. The wicked conglomeration of missiles smote the proa amidships, just between wind and water. The hole which instantly appeared was in the nature of a cavern. The fragile vessel heeled swiftly as the sea rushed in like a cataract, and even while the crew was jumping in all directions, she filled and sank lower and lower, the slender, overhanging bow settling upon a sandbank at the side of the channel. Thus, waterlogged, the proa blocked the fairway as the vessel just behind her came rushing on full tilt, forced to make a hasty choice of stranding or colliding. A moment of fatal indecision and the swiftly moving proa rammed the stern of the obstructing hulk and her forward planking crumpled up like matchwood. Then, swerving round broadside on by the wind, the second proa sank beside the first, a dire entanglement which the third in line escaped only by veering off to run hard and fast aground in the shallows.

The remaining proas, which had not entered the channel, swooped away from the trap, hastily trimmed sail and tacked off to find sea-room, as thoroughly discomfited a lot of Malay freebooters as ever sought plunder.

The company aboard the Nautilus stared at the wreckage in the channel, then at one another. One moment the crew had been lined along the bulwarks ready to make desperate resistance; in the next the danger had passed like a scene staged for a panoramic effect.

Fleming was first to grasp the full import of what had occurred, and with a shout of jubilation, he announced: 'It's too good to be true! We can keep them out as long as we like. Stretch a chain cable between the masts of those two wrecked proas at shallow water and the fairway is closed as tight as a cork in a bottle. We're safe against being troubled from seaward.'

The practical-minded first mate scratched his head and anticipated the captain's second thought by observing in accents less joyful: 'But if they can't get in, it is blamed certain that we can't get out. Those broken-backed hulks yonder will fetch us up all standing and the ship is inside the bottle. And nothing short of dynamite and a gang of wreckers will ever clear that channel for us. It's a proposition that works both ways any way you look at it.'

'Out of the frying-pan into the fire,' came from the gunner's mate in loud and disgusted tones as he swabbed out his six-pounder while his gun crew made fast the tackles and breeching. 'My aim was good, likewise my intentions, but I was thinking of only one thing at a time. I hereby recommend chisels in place o' shrapnel to His Majesty's bloomin' navy.'

'You're all right, Harris,' chorused the crew as they pounded him on the back. 'It takes a pirate to catch a pirate. We'll take a petition to the captain to let you sign on with us. If things keep on coming as fast as this, we'll need you again before we sight Stonehaven Light.'

'Harris may sign the ship's articles whenever he likes,' Fleming sung out to them, letting discipline go by the board for the moment. 'Now, men, things looked black enough when that schooner was pounding us, but we came out on top. And while we seem to be in a serious situation here, we are not going to lose our nerve. Getting blown ashore on the coast of Sumatra may be the luckiest trick in

the bag. It will give us a chance to work without having to keep one eye on those rascals afloat. And if the ship swims, we'll find a way to get her to sea.'

'Which is most gratifying to hear,' murmured Miss Penfold. 'But oh, dear, one thing seems to happen right after another.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE KING OF TOMBA

Through the night following the repulse of the proas, many fires were seen along the beach and in the verdure near by, as if the villagers were bivouacked and awaiting some expected event. More canoes dropped down the river, but none hailed or molested the ship. In the morning two or three proas rocked far outside the bar, seemingly on patrol or blockading duty. It was plausible to assume that there were two parties or opinions — the natives on the proas unleashed and eager to slay and loot, those on shore restrained by some unseen power and bound to keep the peace.

Inextricable as his plight appeared, Stephen Fleming could not sit and bite his nails in surrender to fate. It was for him to find a way out of this blind alley of circumstances, nor was it worth while to consult with Miss Penfold. Overnight her fine hopefulness ebbed and she awoke in a dismayed and wavering mind. So long as there was brisk movement and the excitement of a direct encounter with adversity, she could be courageous and indomitable. To be condemned to stand idly by, however, and contemplate the wreck of her dearest dreams was more than her volatile temperament could endure. Angela hovered about her with fluttering tenderness, brightly confident and self-forgetful, praising the proved resourcefulness of Stephen Fleming.

At the first opportunity, Fleming called Angela aside and said, his manner embarrassed, his eyes hardly raised from the deck: 'Something has to be done, and I am going

ashore to find out what is in the wind. Those people yonder will not hurt me. They are under waiting orders of some kind.'

'And leave us all alone?'

'I am of no help to you here. The ship will not be attacked to-day. If those proas mean more mischief, they must first collect canoes enough to bring a party through the channel. Will you try to keep Miss Hester from fretting about me? This is all my fault, you know. I would insist on bringing the ship out East and I seem to have made a frightful mess of things.'

'I will do whatever you tell me,' gravely replied Angela. 'But you must not reproach yourself, and — and — believe that your friends have lost faith in you: as if there was no such thing as honorable, even glorious failure — as if a man had disgraced himself when he had done his best — — as if — as if — it made any difference —' Her hard-won courage could carry her no farther. The sound of her own words shocked her. To break the shackles of convention, openly to speak the truth, had demanded such incredible hardihood that she was amazed at her own daring, yet in her stammering confusion there was neither shame nor regret. Was Stephen Fleming to leave her and risk his life anew and say never a word?

There was silence between them while he regarded her with troubled, adoring gaze, and his mouth twitched as he said at length, gently as if he were explaining a difficult problem to a beloved child:

'You do not quite understand. A man and a woman never see things in just the same way. I cannot respect myself unless I win the game. I am lashed fast body and soul to the Penfold adventure. No matter how much you may be willing to overlook my failure — it cannot mend matters for me. I can't even stretch out a hand to you, and I love

you — I love you — oh, you have made me say it, but you must forget that I said it, for I have no right —'

He turned away, nor looked behind him as he went forward and called his men together. Presently a boat's crew rowed him off to the beach and Angela watched the stalwart figure in white duck until he leaped from the gunwale to the surf-washed sand and vanished behind the screening verdure.

Then she returned to Miss Penfold's room and said: 'This all began as a make-believe voyage when you and I used to weave our fancies over the old logbooks at home. Sometimes I wish it had never come true. Perhaps we should have been happier.'

'The ship may yet be saved,' said Miss Hester. 'We must not let ourselves lose confidence in Stephen Fleming and in our lucky star.'

'I was not thinking of the ship,' replied Angela.

As Fleming had hoped, he was not molested ashore. On the contrary, his reception was marked by a surprising deference and an informal escort trooped after him along a trail that led back toward a considerable village of wattled bamboo huts, surrounded by a stockade, which he had discerned from a masthead of the ship. The head man, a very dark Malay of middle age, of a sedate gravity of bearing, met the crowd at the edge of the clearing and commanded them to fall back while he beckoned Fleming to follow him to his house. There he bade him be seated, with courteous nod and gesture, and they faced each other upon grass mats spread on a breeze-swept porch or corridor. A servant, a sprightly young fellow, naked to the waist, in white sarong, his head bound with a white handkerchief, brought coffee and loose-rolled cigars of choice Sumatra tobacco.

Thus they waited, smiling at each other in friendly fash-

ion, while the villagers drifted up and down the narrow street and eyed them wonderingly. At length there was a stir and clamor, and an excited rush toward the leafy trail which led inland to the mountain country. Some one shouted a shrill, warning cry and the people fled back like rabbits and scuttled into their houses. Soon there defiled from the forest a column of white-clad muscular young men armed with spears and krises who marched as if they had been drilled. Behind this bodyguard appeared a litter in which rode a square, deep-chested, bull-necked man resplendent in garments of richly embroidered silks. In a second litter was a familiar figure with head bandaged, at sight of whom Fleming cried aloud: 'Batu Pang himself. And he is coming back in style. The other must be the tip-top rajah, the King of Tomba.'

A third litter emerged from the trail. It contained a tiny, withered man, so wrinkled and gray as to appear aged beyond all counting. He reminded Fleming more of a sun-dried monkey than anything else he could think of. The head man had hurried out to make humble obeisance to the foremost litter as the procession halted inside the gateway of the stockade. Batu Pang climbed to the ground, rather limp and tottering, but big with importance and able resonantly to deliver himself of this message:

'The King, and no other, has come to see you, O Captain, sar. It is his order for you to go with him to see the ship.'

The ruler waved a cordial hand, waiting until Fleming had hastened to greet him, hat in hand, after which the line of march was resumed toward the ocean. The martial banging of gongs, the sturdy young soldiers in the van swung out through the other gate of the stockade, while Fleming fell back to ask Batu Pang what this spectacular pilgrimage could mean.

'I ran away from the ship to go to Karang and tell my people to come quick and help,' explained the other. 'I was sick, but Allah gave strength to my legs and I was afraid of the bad men who came from the sea. My life is a little thing, but you gave it to me and my friends are many in Karang.'

'But where did you sign articles with His Majesty the King of Tomba? And what does he propose doing with my ship?' persisted Fleming.

'I fell down with a great weakness, sar, and my head was full of fire while I was trying to steal a canoe and find men to sail with me to Karang. This very old man who rides behind me, he was in a fisherman's hut near the sea, and he saw the ship come ashore, and he sent a messenger to the King, the great Rong Larok, who is master of this coast and a hundred times a hundred villages. Those who found me lying in the bushes without sense carried me to this old, old ape of a man, and when he found out that I was from the ship he sent me, strung between bamboo poles, to the King.'

'And then what?'

'There was much talk between the King and the old, old fisherman. Through the first night watch they talked together as women talk, or the leaves when the monsoon blows. They woke me up many times and asked me a thousand questions about the ship and the people in her, and I told the truth. Then the King clapped his hands and laughed, loud and big, like the great noise of a chain cable running through a hawse, and I knew it was well with you and the ship, and I was glad and slept.'

'But what the deuce did they jabber about all that time?' impatiently besought Fleming. 'You are most infernally long-winded yourself, Batu Pang. I must read the riddle before the King goes aboard my ship.'

'The words of kings are not to be thrown about underfoot. Rong Larok will tell you when he gets good-and-damn ready. That is a very strong word of the English, sar.'

Then the sea flashed no more than a few yards away, the King descended heavily from his gorgeous litter, walked to the shore of the bay, a soldier at either elbow, and gazed long at the Nautilus. Then he summoned the wizened, gray little fisherman, who hobbled slowly over the sand, his twiglike arms waving to and fro while he chattered in shrill-cracked accents.

Rong Larok, overlord of islands, coasts, and mountains, and all that lay between, asked many guttural, deliberate questions. The fisherman peered at the ship, his bleared, filmy eyes blinking as if the sunlight pained them, but he was vehemently confident of what he beheld. After a tedious parley between these two, the King called out to Fleming, who seized Batu Pang by the arm and led him in tow as an interpreter. The substance of the King's speech ran as follows:

'This fisherman was living when my father was King of Tomba — yes, when my grandfather ruled. He is as old as the tall trees of the forest, and he remembers many things long ago forgotten. He has seen this ship before, when my father was a young man. The ship looked then just as she does now, which is a very wonderful thing for a ship to have lived so long. This man from Karang who sailed with you has told me that what the old fisherman said was a true thing. The ship is named the Nautilus, and she comes from Stonehaven in America. And more marvelous than this, for now I can see and believe for myself, the flag at her mast is the flag of the tribe of Penfold. Ho, bring me the package in the litter.'

A small bundle wrapped in yellow silk was quickly carried to the King. Unrolling it with curiously reverent care, he

displayed a frayed and faded square of bunting, a blue Maltese cross on a white background, a relic of a Penfold trading voyage to the coast of Sumatra in the days before he was born.

'It is the same flag,' said he. 'This was given to me by the King, my father. There is also a letter, but —' Turning abruptly from Fleming he looked at the ship and exclaimed, 'I will go on board at once. This man from Karang tells me that the daughter of Captain Amos Penfold sails in the Nautilus. I must talk with her.'

Fleming waved his hat and the boat that had been awaiting his return pulled into the beach. Rong Larok was lifted into the stern-sheets by his two body-servants, while the armed escort sought the shade and amiably fraternized with the admiring villagers and fishermen. The mate of the Nautilus perceived that the passenger in the resplendent robes must be a person of importance and ordered a salute fired from the brass cannon.

A smile lighted the heavy countenance of the King as he announced: 'Thus it was when my father visited Captain Penfold in this same ship.'

Miss Hester Penfold was waiting to receive her guest beneath the awning of the quarterdeck and her spirits had swiftly risen. The tide of her fortunes was at the turn, she surmised. A gracious and self-possessed hostess, she received Rong Larok as if she had been in her own drawing-room, and that Sumatran potentate was no less courtly.

'Your father was my father's friend,' said he; and with an expressive sweep of his mighty arm, ' this is all my country.'

'I am honored to meet one who was a friend of Captain Amos Penfold,' she returned, Batu Pang interpreting in a loud, animated voice.

The King took from his garments a flat packet, removed

the outer covering, opened another protecting envelope of leather, and extended to Miss Penfold a creased document, yellowed by time.

'There is the letter,' said the King. 'It will tell you why I have come to see you.'

Slowly she read aloud the words written by the well-remembered hand of her seafaring father:

On Board Ship Nautilus
Kingdom of Tomba, Sumatra
February the 10th, 1841

To His Majesty, Rong Telok:

Being about to sail from this coast I wish once more to thank you for your many kindnesses and your stanch friendship. To every American shipmaster in the Sumatra trade I shall carry word of your integrity, loyalty, and honorable dealings. I owe to you, not only the success of my adventure, but also the safety of my ship and the lives of my crew. I hope to repay you, and I am glad that I was able to be of some service during the events of the recent rebellion. I am sending you as a farewell token of my esteem a box of gifts from America and the Penfold house-flag which you said you would like to have as a souvenir of my voyage. I am, with renewed expressions of the greatest respect, good-will and gratitude

Your friend and obedient servant
Amos Penfold

Miss Hester Penfold was herself again. Romance had once more spread its shining wings and her dreams were coming true in happiest and most inspiring fashion. Her lucky star had only been hidden behind a passing cloud. As if this interview were not in the least astounding, she looked up from the letter to explain:

'The records and journals of my father's first voyages in this ship have been lost. The Nautilus went into the San Francisco trade around the Horn when the gold rush began in 1849, and from that route she was shifted to carrying tea home from China. I had quite forgotten, or perhaps I

never knew, that this ship made a Sumatra voyage only a year after she was launched. I am so used to associating the Sumatra trade with my grandfather and great-grandfather that I have quite overlooked Captain Amos Penfold's early voyage to this part of the world.'

Her memory quickened by the dramatic coincidence of this meeting with the King of Tomba, she turned to say to Angela:

'There is a bundle of my father's letters in the chest with the logbooks. Most of them have to do with his later voyages, but there is one letter written in Arabic, as I recall it. I have not looked at it for years, but I was always going to have it translated. It may perhaps relate to this very voyage to Sumatra.'

Angela flew below and returned with the heap of documents, which Miss Penfold shuffled over until she was able to extract a folded paper which she offered the King, saying rather apologetically:

'Of course it may have nothing to do with the case. But the fact that the letter is written in Arabic and was so carefully preserved by my father when most of his other papers of that time were lost or destroyed —'

Rong Larok heard her not. He was reading to himself, his lips moving, his dark face expressing pleasant emotions. Then he threw back his head with an air of stately pride and spoke slowly, his voice booming with bell-like reverberations: 'It was written by my father. Here are his words as he set them down':

The brass cannon which you sent from your ship to my fort at Tapa Allong won the victory with the help of Allah and the rebels were driven away. The sailors you sent with the cannon fought like devils, and when we had dragged the cannon through the forest to chase the rebels and follow up the victory, the brave Americans knocked their stockades to pieces with the cannon and there was no more fighting.

I was glad that I could kill and scatter them when they attacked your ship. In this way we helped each other as strong men and friends. When you come again, I shall welcome you. If you do not come, the welcome will be for your children and your children's children, so long as my sons are kings. Other ship captains coming to trade with my people have been liars and cheats, but you are worthy to be the friend and blood brother of kings.

'The two old chaps certainly organized a mutual admiration society,' murmured Ogden Haight in an aside to Angela.

'It is all so delightfully, extravagantly impossible that I know it is true,' said she. 'His Majesty has stepped straight out of the pages of the Arabian Nights. But I am not in the least surprised, and as for Aunt Hester she takes it as a matter of course.'

Rong Larok had graciously condescended to seat himself in a deck-chair facing Miss Penfold, while Batu Pang squatted close by and buzzed like a huge bumble-bee as he tried to keep pace with the flow of conversation. Beaming and vivacious, the owner of the Nautilus revealed the inspiration and purpose of her adventurous pilgrimage, while the King nodded sagely, interpolating an occasional ejaculation of sympathy or comprehension. Apparently he accepted it as the most natural thing in the world that an elderly spinster should set out on a quest of this kind. Privately, however, he may have viewed it as a supernatural kind of business — that the soul of Captain Amos Penfold had transferred itself to the daughter, and that the ancient ship had been as mysteriously reincarnated. Certainly the Nautilus must have been directed to this coast by means of the magic of the writing which Rong Larok had so long treasured as a sacred heritage.

Waiting courteously until her narrative was finished, he began to speak of his father, recalling boyish memories

which made his smouldering eyes brighten and his nostrils twitch with excitement — memories of battles and marches and sieges against one border tribe after another and against the greedy encroachments of the Dutch. Under the spell of his fiery, eloquent descriptions of the savage turmoil that had beset coast and forest and mountain ere the kingdom had been welded together in an enduring peace, it was possible to visualize the episodes that had made that friendship between the preceding king Rong Telok and the New England shipmaster Amos Penfold. In imagination the listeners saw the squad of Yankee tars dragging their brass guns through jungle and swamp and up the steep hillsides and hammering away at bamboo stockades and mud-walled bastions as if they were out for a holiday lark.

While the King was recalling what he had heard from his father of the treacherous attack on the Nautilus and the bloody rout that ensued when the royal forces surprised the mob on the ship's deck and cut them down to a man, he suddenly rose and looked seaward, scowling ferociously. Two proas were slowly beating to and fro beyond the bar, and he exclaimed: 'Those people give me much trouble. They live on the islands off my coast and are hard to hold in check. I will send a message to them. If their boats are seen again off this river, their villages will be burned by my own soldiers and ships.'

Captain Fleming thanked him and indicated the wreckage of the proas which had been sunk in the channel. Then the story of the engagement had to be told at first hand, and Rong Larok laughed with delight. He wished to meet the gunner's mate who had so neatly blocked the entrance, and Harris was summoned aft.

After scanning him approvingly, the King remarked to Fleming: 'So he is a pirate and it was your plan to have him hanged at Batavia? Ho, ho, if all the pirates of my coast

were hanged, there would be no more hemp to make rope in Sumatra. Will you give me this Englishman?'

'He has signed articles as one of my crew, but he may do as he likes. I shall not try to hold him. He has earned the right to chart his own course.'

'I will make him commander of a fort, or give him a ship with plenty of brass guns and he can shoot other pirates,' chuckled the King. 'Will he come?'

'He'll come like a shot!' heartily exclaimed Harris. 'I've been looking for that kind of a berth all my life. Next to bein' cast away on a cannibal island and rulin' it as a king, this suits me jolly well.'

'And I like him for it,' said Miss Penfold. 'It is the romantic spirit. What a pity it would have been to hang him!'

Her expression was a trifle wistful as she once more gave heed to the King, as if wondering when this august and powerful visitor meant to take her destiny in hand and attend to her misfortunes.

'You wish to trade as your father did?' he rumbled. 'This is what I understand. No American ship has come to this coast since my father ruled. Never before to-day have I seen the American flag. Many, many years ago, the American captains came to buy pepper.'

'Yes, and it was my own great-grandfather who discovered that pepper grew wild in Sumatra!' she exclaimed. 'And he carried home the first cargo ever shipped to my country. He took it right out from under the noses of the Dutch and English, and he kept the secret so well that for several years the world's pepper market was controlled from Stonehaven, right in the Penfold counting-house. So much for Captain John Penfold in the schooner Chieftain. Many years have passed since the pepper trade was a romance of Stonehaven commerce, and I had not thought

seriously of seeking such a cargo. I was informed that all the Sumatra pepper was controlled by the Dutch traders and that I must first go to Batavia before attempting to obtain any of the products of this island or of Java.'

'Pepper!' thundered the King. 'Your father took away the last cargo of pepper ever loaded into an American ship, almost seventy years ago. My people grow much pepper to-day, but it is taken to Singapore and Batavia. This year's crop need not go to those ports. But first the ship must be floating again. I will call together my rajahs and head men from the towns near the coast. It is most shameful if the Penfold flag is to fly over a wrecked ship.'

He moved bulkily, with a deliberate, masterful bearing, toward the gangway and was rowed ashore, soon after which the column of his escort was seen to precede the litter along the trail that led to the back country.

'He is a truly benevolent despot,' was Miss Penfold's comment, delivered with serenest composure. 'I must confess that he seems more like an hallucination than anything that has happened to us, but I have the greatest faith that he will make everything all right. His sense of loyalty and gratitude brings tears to my eyes.'

'He does fit into the romantic scheme of things without a flaw,' said Ogden Haight. 'And pepper! Now there is the kind of cargo an old-fashioned captain's clerk ought to handle. Pepper founded the Penfold fortune.'

'And pepper will restore it,' affirmed Miss Hester.

'I am not so sure of that. A whole shipload of pepper would be enough to set the country sneezing from Boston to Seattle. The trade is handled through England nowadays. If we suddenly deluge the market with pepper, prices may break all to smithereens, and then where do we stand? Coffee, tobacco, spices, camphor, say I — a mixed cargo and a prudent adventure.'

'First catch your pepper,' wisely suggested Angela.

'I shall follow the counsel of the family logbooks to the letter' — and Miss Hester was stubbornness itself. 'We have been plainly guided to the Kingdom of Tomba to do as did the other Penfolds before us — trade for Sumatra pepper. If my great-grandfather, and my grandfather and my own father came here for pepper, can I do otherwise?'

'Why, listen to this,' chimed in Arthur Breck. 'I marked this paragraph in a novel I was reading only the other day. It fits us to a dot — all about the old duffers who came out to this coast a century or two ago: "For a bag of pepper they would cut each other's throats without hesitation, and would forswear their souls of which they were so careful otherwise. The bizarre obstinacy of their desire made them defy death in a thousand shapes, unknown seas, wounds, captivity, hunger, pestilence, and despair. It made them great, by Heavens! It made them heroic, and it made them pathetic, too, in their craze for trade."'

'Arthur, you are adding fuel to the flames,' chided his sister. 'Please take your story and yourself somewhere else.'

'"The bizarre obstinacy of their desire,"' said Ogden Haight. 'That diagnoses your case most accurately, Miss Hester. In fact, it would serve very nicely as a motto for the voyage.'

'There is one bright word in my lexicon and it is spelled P-E-P-P-E-R,' was the reply.

'I am your obedient servant,' continued Haight. 'Here is where the captain's clerk comes into his own and earns his wages. If the King of Tomba means business and will give me a chance to display my wares, I am ready to dicker with him and to defy death in a thousand shapes for the

sake of a few hundred per cent profit. I must get my manifests and price lists together.'

'The fact that the ship is still stuck hard and fast to the island of Sumatra has nothing to do with it, I suppose,' put in Fleming. 'I don't want to put any reefs in your enthusiasm, so you had better take it for granted that we'll be making sail again some day.'

Miss Penfold needed no assurances of this kind. She was absorbed in perfecting the details of the trading adventure and insisted that she be heard:

'Stephen Fleming, you talk as dismally as Captain Chester Burdick. Here is one of my grandfather's Sumatra journals. It sounds like an unkindness to the King, but it behooves you to be very careful in your dealings, Ogden, for please listen to this entry: "On your arrival at Sumatra, you contract with the Dattoo, or chief, for the pepper and fix the price. If more than one vessel is at the port, the pepper which comes daily to the scales is shared among them as they agree. Sometimes the Dattoo contracts to load one vessel before another vessel is allowed to take any, and he holds to the agreement as long as it is to his interest to do so and no longer, for a handsome present or an increase in his price will prevent the pepper from being brought in for several days and the person who made the agreement must either quit the port or make an additional price."'

'But we are only one ship and are in no position to drive a bargain of any kind,' observed Angela. 'If we can save the Nautilus, I shall be very thankful, and I am sure that this King will not try to cheat the captain's clerk.'

'If the skipper will attend to detaching his ship from the island of Sumatra,' said the captain's clerk, 'I propose to build a warehouse and show-room on the beach. We have the most up-to-date cargo ever seen in these waters, in

spite of our old-fashioned notions, and, when it comes to trading methods, I expect to set the coast agog. And to think I was once wasting my talents as president of a golf club!'

Two days later a hundred brown and rugged fellows, led by the head men of the nearest villages, appeared on the beach and waved white cloths at the ship in token of their desire to fall to work. Another battalion came down the river in canoes and swarmed aboard, after which they sent their craft ashore to bring off their comrades. A few hours later, two armed proas of the King's navy came sweeping toward the bar and anchored until several smaller sailing craft joined them; and while Captain Fleming royally bossed the willing gangs of natives in the ship, the floating contingent attacked the wreckage that blocked the channel. Divers bobbed about the sunken proas like seals and plunged down to the submerged decks with mysterious packages which they handled with the most gingerly caution. Next day the King made a second visit and explained that he had been building a road through a mountain pass, wherefore there was much dynamite in his storehouse. He lingered until a liberal quantity of the dynamite aforesaid was safely tucked into the holds of the sunken proas and applauded from the deck of the Nautilus when the obstructions vanished in a prodigious shower of spray and débris.

The entrance cleared in this summary fashion, his vessels filed through the channel and were moored alongside the Nautilus. Lighters had been roughly built of the lumber in the cargo and the merchandise was discharging with great speed. A few days of this cheerful and humming industry and the ship would be almost emptied.

'I can think of nothing but the ship,' Fleming said to Haight. 'You must look after the cargo, and I hope with all my heart that you can dispose of it and make a hand-

some profit. Once afloat and with some kind of repairs made, you can cram her to the hatches with pepper or whatever else you like, and I'll sail her home to Stonehaven if her planks hold together.'

'We are not at all sure that the Oriental monarch, Rong Larok, intends to give us a cargo. He has said nothing more about it. He may think he has squared that ancient friendship between the two ready letter-writers if he gets the ship to sea again. And that would be no small favor.'

As if there might be something in this chilling surmise, the King came not nor sent any word until a week had passed. So inconsistent and crochety is human nature that the ship's company, who had been so marvelously saved from death no more than a few days before, now worried exceedingly concerning the problem of turning merchandise into money. It would be unfair, however, to call their ambition mere greed of gain. They had set forth, lured by a vision, conceived and pursued with 'bizarre obstinacy,' in which the desire of gain had played but a minor part.

At length the ship had been so much lightened that Fleming planned to try kedging her off the bottom at the next high tide. The crew was sent aloft to make repairs and he was delighted to learn that, with what spare spars he carried and the help of native workmen to ship new topmasts, he might make shift to undertake the homeward voyage. There were axes and other woodworking tools in the cargo and the ship's carpenter impressed a small army of Malays to make the chips fly. The Nautilus still leaked, but Fleming hoped to be able to careen her while empty and make all tight by replacing the damaged planking and caulking the open seams.

The prospect of witnessing this old-fashioned feat of seamanship delighted Miss Penfold, who blithely announced: 'Our programme would not be complete without

careening the Nautilus. I can show you a log journal containing the most minute directions for careening a ship without straining the masts or hull.'

When the absence of His Majesty, Rong Larok, had become a matter of grave concern, a messenger arrived with tidings that he would arrive next day. He sent apologies for his seeming neglect, explaining that he had been expecting the arrival of the Dutch Deputy Resident from a district just beyond the border of the Kingdom of Tomba, but that he proposed to wait no longer for that dilatory gentleman.

Early in the morning, before Rong Larok could be expected to descend in state from his mountain capital, a squat gunboat flying Dutch colors came waddling out of the northward, sheered in toward the coast, and let go anchor outside the bar. It was of course possible that the war vessel had come as a friendly visitor to offer assistance to a ship in distress, but the arrival was viewed from the Nautilus with vague misgivings that the errand might be a meddlesome one. This suspicion was confirmed when a boat had been pulled cautiously through the channel by a crew of round-faced Dutch sailors under big straw hats.

A stolid, yellow-haired young lieutenant in white uniform, brass buttons, sword, and shoulder straps, clambered up the side of the ship, stalked to the quarterdeck, and, with a bow to the ladies, briefly inquired: 'Who vas the captain of this wessel? I vish to talk mit him.'

Fleming stepped forward, saluted very formally, and answered with no great cordiality, for the lieutenant's manner was irritating: 'I am the master. Will you sit down?'

'Mit der bermission of the ladies,' quoth the lieutenant, with an admiring glance at Angela. 'I haf no objection to the ship being wrecked on this coast mitout authority from my government, captain. Und I haf orders to safe life und

property. But it iss reported dot you vill trade und maybe take a cargo of pepper or somedings. Dis you vould do mitout bermission of my government?'

He waved an arm toward the mountains, and went on to say with tremendous solemnity: 'Sumatra belongs mit der Dutch. Dot new pepper crop vas already arranged mit permits to go to Batavia und Singapore. You vill trade mitout no permits? Impossible. It iss a misunderstandings. You haf not long enough thinked about it.'

'We have made no contracts of any kind to load cargo,' Fleming replied. 'We were blown ashore, as you very well know. But I am under the impression that the King of these parts, Rong Larok, doesn't care a hang what the Dutch may have to say about his business affairs. We are expecting him on board some time to-day. I think you had better thresh the matter out with him.'

'The Deputy Resident from Karang iss in my gunboat,' very stiffly returned the lieutenant. 'He vas come to haf speech mit the King of Tomba. Vat is dot building you iss building on shore, eh? It looks like a warehouse to fill mit goods for trade. You iss making troubles for yourself, captain. I vill vait for orders from the Deputy Resident from Karang, but I adwise you to pull down dot haus und move the t'ings in back in your ship. If you don't, maybe I vill haf to purn it up.'

The lieutenant toyed with his blond mustache, ogled Angela like a true son of Mars, and, bowing after the manner of a wooden man hinged at the waist, clumped to the gangway.

Fleming was tactless enough to fire this parting shot: 'I take my orders from Rong Larok. And that warehouse will stay where it is unless he tells me to pull it down.'

'Dot iss foolish talk,' was the phlegmatic reply. 'I haf heard of Yankee bluffs before.'

Until afternoon the gunboat rolled lazily off the bar. Then a noise of drums and gongs came from the forest and the retinue of the King of Tomba debouched from the trail, not a bodyguard, but an army, for company after company, armed with modern service rifles, streamed out from under the trees until they were to be counted by regiments.

'Yankee bluff?' said Fleming with a gratified smile. 'It looks more as if a Dutch bluff was about to be called. The King's lookouts up in the mountain must have seen the gunboat this morning and he has come down in style to meet the Deputy Resident from Karang.'

The troops paraded the beach in orderly ranks and made an impressive spectacle while Rong Larok went on board the ship, attended by a dozen of his picked men. Touching the hilt of his wonderfully jeweled kris in fealty to Miss Penfold, he crooked a finger at that obsequious interpreter, Batu Pang, and demanded an account of the visit of the commander of the Dutch gunboat.

This business dispatched, the King addressed Miss Penfold, and his deep-set eyes twinkled with grim humor: 'I will soon finish this matter of the Dutch, O daughter of my father's friend. If the Deputy Resident from Karang wishes to have talk with me, let him come to your ship. Is it your pleasure?'

'Certainly, Your Majesty,' she answered. 'And if he proves to be as pompous and disagreeable as the naval officer, I sincerely trust that you may teach him good manners. We have been forbidden to trade on your coast without the permission of the Dutch.'

'That shall be attended to' — and the King smiled slowly as if he perceived a jest very much to his liking. 'The Deputy Resident from Karang has many things to learn. He came not long ago from another district of Sumatra.

Karang is beyond the border of my country. He may have forgotten this thing.'

After some delay a cutter pulled away from the Dutch gunboat, and on this trip a spectacled person partly eclipsed by a huge pith helmet sat beside the lieutenant. As neutral territory the deck of the ship was perhaps a wisely chosen place for this interview. The Deputy Resident proved to be spare and bald, sputtering in guttural, broken English when scolding the Americans, and haranguing the King in the native tongue. The immovable, ponderous dignity of Rong Larok was lightened only by a calm, slow smile which seemed to incense the official, somewhat as a terrier is annoyed by the genial indifference of a mastiff.

To the rapid expostulation the King held up his hand with a warning gesture and said without excitement: 'I have kept faith with the Dutch, so no more of this woman's chatter. Your people have traded with my people because it was my will, not yours. It is a custom, not a law.'

'But time has made it as binding as law,' protested the Deputy Resident.

'There is no treaty that makes it law,' returned the King. 'It is not found in the writing which my father signed with the Dutch. You may give permits to your traders, but I am the King of my own country. Twenty years the Dutch fought against my father and then peace was made — by the Dutch. And the peace has not been broken. Are you hungry to break it? Are there so many Dutch soldiers that you want to throw them away in my swamps and mountains?'

'But I have not talked of war!' gasped the other. 'It is the right of my people to trade with yours. This American ship must go to Batavia if her captain wishes to load with merchandise from Sumatra. If one ship is allowed to trade in this way, others may come, and a great wrong will be

done to my countrymen who have built up this commerce.'

'Sumatra?' — and the King spoke softly. 'Not all of Sumatra. There is no Dutch Deputy Resident in Tomba.' He struck his fists together, breathing audibly, and when he spoke again it was by no means softly.

'You have not talked of war. *But I talk of war!* These friends of mine, this ship, are mine to do with as I wish. I am dishonored in their sight if I break the knot that was tied by my father, Rong Telok, King of Tomba, ruler over many rajahs. I swore to him that the knot should not be broken. Yes; they shall trade with me, they shall fill the ship — not once only, but as many times as the Penfold flag shall come to my coast. Take my words to Batavia. There is to be no more woman's chatter, no more gunboats, no more Deputy Residents unless they come in peace.'

'I do not wish to exceed my authority,' nervously stammered the startled official. 'It is, of course, understood that you have no intention of violating the terms of the protectorate. I will refer the matter to my government at Batavia. Meanwhile, I hope you will not try to move the new pepper crop.'

The King laughed, a great mellow, contemptuous laugh that rolled landward to his waiting troops.

'The new pepper crop will not go to Batavia or to Singapore,' said he.

The Deputy Resident blew his nose, adjusted his spectacles, and fanned himself with his helmet. The atmosphere was so notably hostile that his legs carried him toward the gangway while he was trying to frame a suitable rejoinder to this insolent ultimatum. By his side marched the lieutenant.

Shortly before sunset the gunboat weighed anchor, smoke poured from her low funnel, and, with never a salute in honor of royalty, she steamed away in the direction of

Karang. His Majesty enjoyed this spectacular retreat, sent an order to his regiments to begin the homeward march, and shortly thereafter departed with his personal escort. The purpose of his visit had been revealed in his resounding address to the Deputy Resident. Now that the ship was afloat and ready to load cargo, he was prepared to coöperate. And because Miss Penfold had confided that pepper was the hereditary freightage of her family and she must refuse to consider anything else, he was mightily resolved to gratify her desire.

The adventurers were gathered on the quarterdeck, watching the torches of the King's bodyguard flicker through the foliage like fireflies when Miss Penfold observed with an ecstatic sigh: 'Now do you believe in our lucky star?'

'There is champagne in the storeroom, and, incongruous as it sounds for a Penfold ship, the ice machine is working most satisfactorily,' blandly suggested Ogden Haight. 'What say you all to drinking the health of His Majesty, Rong Larok of Tomba, and success to the Penfold adventure?'

'I can give you a corking good toast to follow it,' sung out Arthur Breck — '*This beats the Dutch!*'

CHAPTER XIV

HOMEWARD-BOUND

'This is bargain day in the Tomba shopping district,' announced the captain's clerk as he welcomed a delegation from the Nautilus to his warehouse, the front of which bore the signboard:

THE PENFOLD TRADING COMPANY (LIMITED)

'The King is coming down to look over the stock,' said he, 'and I can only hope and pray that he likes our merchandise. Of course the old Penfold skippers used to pay for their pepper in specie, for the most part, but we cannot afford to make that kind of bargain. We shall need all our cash reserve to pay the expenses of the voyage by the time we sight Stonehaven again.'

'I have a great deal of faith in your business judgment,' was Miss Penfold's comment. 'So far as I can learn from our interpreter, Batu Pang, the natives of Tomba raise a great deal of coffee and tobacco. He is afraid that it will be very difficult to collect a shipload of pepper unless some of it is brought in from other districts of the island. It would simply spoil the voyage and be disloyal to the family tradition to consider anything else than pepper. And the King is a man of his word.'

The King himself put an end to these surmises by drawing near with the customary martial clamor, and Haight went forth to meet him with nervous strides, convinced that the burden of responsibility had now fallen upon his shoulders. Fortunately, that independent ruler, Rong Larok, hemmed in by sea and mountain, defying the

Dutch, had dwelt in a splendid primitive isolation that had been a barrier against familiarity with the inventions and diversions of a complex civilization. He had purchased modern arms from German agents as he needed them, but the royal funds had not been squandered on tawdry and useless luxuries such as so often dazzle the childish imagination of the Oriental plutocrat. Venturesome commercial rovers had been turned back at the borders of Tomba to take their wares elsewhere.

The cargo of the Nautilus was a very different matter, however, and it was with an open and receptive mind that Rong Larok permitted himself to be convoyed to the warehouse of 'The Penfold Trading Company.' Miss Penfold felt that the most critical stage of the adventure was imminent. Captain Stephen Fleming no longer held the center of the stage. Her judgment and business acumen were at stake. Had she selected the kind of cargo that would appeal to the natives of the coast of Sumatra?

Fleming had come ashore to witness the great event, and was more agitated than when the fate of the voyage had been in his hands. More clearly than the others he understood that the pilgrimage must succeed or fail now. He had to admire Haight's ingenuity and industry. And the admiration of the royal visitor was even more unstinted. Whether or not he had come to trade remained to be seen, but certainly no such entertaining display of Yankee enterprise had ever blossomed on the coast of Sumatra.

Rows of shining bicycles, shelves of clocks and lamps and tinware, fascinating ranks of sewing-machines, washing-machines, and grindstones, and an astonishing variety of hardware were flanked by towers and pagodas built of American canned meats and vegetables brilliantly labeled. There were bolts of cloth, overalls to equip a regiment, farming tools of every description, and even a phalanx of

mowing-machines and sulky ploughs. Batteries of talking machines, flashlights, and all sorts of electric devices that could be operated by means of dry cells were marshaled along the counters. In short, a catalogue of the articles exhibited would be longer than that of Homer's ships. It would be heresy to omit mention, for the sake of brevity, of the ramparts built of the lowly but succulent codfish, neatly compressed in small square packets.

Greatly as the memory of Captain Amos Penfold was revered by the King of Tomba, he well knew that the mariner had dazzled the shores of Sumatra with no such trading cargo as this. He appeared rather bewildered by the prodigality of attractions.

Seizing the psychological moment, Haight whispered to Arthur Breck: 'His eyes are getting bigger and bigger and I think we have him going. Trot out a bicycle and do a few fancy stunts on the beach — that's a good boy.'

The youth mounted in the warehouse, cut a swift circle around the King, shot out of the doorway like a runaway comet, and pedaled furiously along the sea-washed sand.

His Majesty looked on gravely and finally announced: 'It is good. I will take all of them. They will travel on the new road I have built through the mountains and my messengers shall run to and fro on the bright two-wheel things. Perhaps they can be used by my cavalry. Fifty piculs of pepper will I give for each one.'

'Great Scot, King,' blurted Haight. 'From what I know of the price of bulk pepper, we can afford to give you a better price than that. We do not want to cheat you.'

'Fifty piculs of pepper,' sternly repeated the King. 'I am not easy to dispute with and my executioner sits yonder on the beach.'

'I beg your pardon,' humbly rejoined the captain's clerk. 'Between friends, you know — but you are per-

fectly right. Don't disturb the siesta of the executioner, if you please.'

'Show me something else,' demanded royalty.

'I wish he had brought a few of his wives along,' said Haight. 'Angela, do you mind giving an exhibition on the sewing-machine?'

Smilingly she acquiesced, and, as the mechanism began to purr and the flying stitches were traced along a strip of cloth, the King almost lost his composure.

'My people will worship this magic friend of women,' said he. 'In every village there shall be a sewing-machine and it will work for all at a price, a very little price, chewing cloth together as swift as the lightning. Fifty piculs of pepper for every cloth-chewer that never is tired.' Grinning amiably he added, 'If this bold young man throws my words in my face, I shall have to speak to the executioner.'

'Ha, ha, a very good joke,' rather feebly returned Haight. 'Fifty piculs of pepper per sewing-machine, and not a picul less — one hundred and thirty-three pounds to the picul.'

In this most agreeable manner the royal purchaser continued to make his own prices until his eye was attracted by the monumental heaps of codfish. Then it was that Miss Hester Penfold, jealous of the honor of this staple of her forefathers, rose to the occasion. No false pride was allowed to stand in her way. This was part of the adventure — even codfish could be viewed as romantic — and she spoke up very sweetly, yet with determination:

'If His Majesty will accept an invitation to luncheon on board our ship, I shall be glad to make codfish balls for him with my own hands. And, when he has once eaten them, I am sure that he will recommend them by special edict for Sunday breakfast throughout his kingdom.'

'Bravo!' cried Angela. 'And we will write out the Stonehaven recipe for his wife — er — for his wives — I mean for the royal kitchen. Oh, if Sussex Street could only see us now!'

Thereupon she went out to the ship with Miss Hester, where they summoned the cook to conference and invaded the galley. At noon the King joined them, led by the lure of the codfish ball, and luncheon was served on deck. The menu artfully included many other dishes prepared with the aid of a can-opener as samples of the edible items of the cargo and Rong Larok, who was a mighty trencherman, voiced thunderous approval. With his coffee and cigar he sipped a champagne glass full of brandy by way of a liqueur, and became slightly absent-minded as if some disturbing thought had come to cloud the feast. A little later he was loquacious but not jovial, and one sympathetic query after another led him to reveal what it was that lay heavy on his mind.

Frankly confessing that he wished to take over the cargo of the Nautilus to the last sewing-machine and the ultimate packet of codfish, he intimated that there might be some delay in filling the ship with pepper. There would be no difficulty about the terms of barter. He was most cheerfully willing to deliver a full cargo of pepper in exchange for the merchandise, which basis of settlement was satisfactory to Miss Penfold and to the captain's clerk. His subjects were a stubborn and intractable lot, however, which the King confessed with a slightly sheepish air, and of course they owned the pepper patches and by immemorial usage expected to sell their harvest to the Dutch traders. The rajahs and head men would be commanded to divert the new pepper crop to the Nautilus, but the pig-headed peasantry might try to smuggle a part of it across the border as a matter of habit and because they

were suspicious of any new thing. And not even the King's army could prevent this kind of contraband activity.

He, Rong Larok, would pay his farmers and villagers for their pepper from the royal treasury and later recoup himself by selling them the surplus sewing-machines, implements, and what not. In other words, he was ready to underwrite the transaction and the prompt delivery of the required amount of pepper was the one doubtful factor. While he did not put it in so many words, it was to be gathered from his explanation that, in the first flush of his devotion to the reincarnated house of Penfold, he had overlooked a phase of the pepper problem that was not to be sneezed at.

'I catch the point,' said Ogden Haight. 'The people may hold back the crop and hide it on you. Our very best citizens at home think smuggling no crime and they are the dickens and all to catch at it. Of course, as you say, a royal edict will make them sit up and take notice — by Jove, I have an inspiration. Do you mind going ashore to the warehouse? I may deceive myself, but this seems to be a stroke of genius. There is a good deal more of the merchandise to be looked over and one consignment in particular — oh, I'll say nothing more until it is put to the test.'

The curiosity of the King was no less keen than that of the other listeners who had begun to take a gloomy view of the Penfold adventure. A boat was manned in haste and the luncheon party embarked pell-mell, Haight pale with excitement as he fixed a glistening eye on Rong Larok and murmured to himself: 'Not a bit crazier than any other incident of this impossible voyage.'

Straight to the array of phonographs he led the way and set the nearest one going. The music of a brass band filled the warehouse and royalty stood entranced. Haight shifted

the record and the powerful voice of a famous tragedian lifted its impassioned accents in a stentorian passage from the 'Merchant of Venice.' The King actually jumped, for the voice sounded astonishingly like his own.

Then, before he could express his wonderment and pleasure, Haight burst out, his words fairly tumbling over each other: 'We have two hundred of these machines and a lot of blank records. Let the King talk into 'em, make two hundred records — a rousing, peremptory command to bring in every last picul of pepper in the country. Send the machines out to all the villages of any size. Turn the phonograph loose on the common, the town square, the market-place, whatever you call it. Let the people hear the accents of His Majesty's own royal voice. Man alive! they will be smitten with seven kinds of awe, fright, and obedience and there won't be enough pepper left in the kingdom to season a salad dressing.'

Rong Larok perceived that a revelation of great importance was being hurled at him, but the interpreter was left hopelessly astern and had to have a slower version before he could convey the import of this magnificent scheme. Then the King shook with laughter from his head to his heels. The magic of the disembodied voice had rather staggered him, but now he could imagine its overwhelming effect upon his simple villagers.

'It is not only for the pepper,' cried he. 'The plan is much bigger than that. Whenever my people are sullen or angry, or refuse to pay the taxes, or to send recruits for my army — ha! I send the magic box to talk to them, the box with my spirit in its bowels. And they will hear my voice and fall on their faces and tremble and make haste to obey. This is the most wonderful thing that ever came over the sea. It is worth the ship full of pepper. Quick, let me talk strong words into the box and you will lock

the words fast so they cannot escape until they are carried to the mountains.'

The King himself may have been inwardly quaking with amazement at the uncanny powers of the phonograph, but he came of courageous stock and not even torture could have made him show the white feather. He stood with arms folded across his broad chest and sturdily regarded the source of this wizardry like another Ajax defying the lightning.

Haight, who could not be diverted from the main purpose, asked anxiously: 'Are you sure it will make the pepper crop move this way?' 'There will be plenty of pepper now,' sententiously replied Rong Larok. 'Not only in my own country will the people obey this voice, but if a few of these talk-boxes are sent across the border, into the districts where live the Dutch Deputy Residents, to the north and to the south, and beyond the mountains? Ho, there will be great fear, and those villages will smuggle their pepper by night into my country and to the ship.'

'That sounds like one on the peppery gentleman from Karang who made such a nuisance of himself when he hopped off the gunboat,' blithely observed Haight.

'I am ready to put my words in the talk-box,' said the King, who was evidently in no mood for delay.

A record was made ready, and Rong Larok took his station in front of the sounding-horn, as directed, his mien lofty and portentous, his scowl as ferocious as if he were about to pass the death sentence. And when he rolled out the resounding edict to his subjects far and near, the audience trembled in its several pairs of shoes, even before they knew what the words meant. As for Batu Pang, he perspired freely and his complexion had a grayish cast as he stumblingly turned the awful proclamation into English.

'That ought to hold them for a while,' irreverently mut-

tered young Arthur. 'When that bombardment of language is turned loose on the peasantry, strong men will burst into tears and hurry home to make their wills. I thought the Dean was going pretty strong when he delivered a private lecture before suspending me from the school, but that was a mere whisper. Now, let's hear how the King's ultimatum sounds on the machine, Ogden.'

It was incredible that the diminutive box and its simple mechanism could emit such a prodigious volume of sound as boomed forth when the commands of the King were repeated from the master record. He himself appeared somewhat taken aback, as if the result was more than he had expected, but he clapped his hands and summoned his servants and escort for a course of instruction in manipulating the magic box in order that they might teach others.

Two or three days later, and up the black and shadowy river, in dugout canoes, along the coast by fast-sailing proas, into the somber forest, and over the mountain trails, journeyed the King's messengers carrying packages carefully wrapped in matting. In remote villages never seen by white man, the savage, timorous folk listened to the unbelievable marvel of the little box that contained the soul of the Great King himself, as his voice told them to do with their pepper as he willed, and that without delay.

Scarred hunters, grizzled chieftains who had faced death in many a tribal foray, Malay pirates who idled in lonely fishing villages, shuddered at the sound of the dread voice, supernatural and compelling, and prayed the gods to have mercy. There were endless arguments over the problem of how the King could have caged his voice in the box, but it was agreed that human agencies had nothing to do with it, and the part of wisdom was to obey.

Everywhere, men, women, and naked brown children were harvesting the seed spikes in the ripening pepper-fields, threshing and winnowing and drying the pungent berries, and packing them in grass bags. Soon the crop began to trickle down to the ship by land and water, swelling in volume until bags of pepper fairly poured into the hatches in a continuous stream. A procession of small craft plied all day between the Nautilus and the beach, and Ogden Haight and his helpers weighed and tallied the score while the sailors stowed the cargo in noble tiers.

The visiting natives carried back to the wilderness country strange and moving tales of the wonderful contrivances displayed in the warehouse and the wings of rumor swiftly carried the news to every corner of the kingdom. Thus was the way made smooth for Rong Larok to make payment for the pepper of his dutiful subjects in the merchandise that he had taken over from the ship in such truly royal fashion.

'I am not at all worried about his end of the venture,' Haight assured Miss Penfold, who was slightly troubled by qualms of conscience. 'There is no danger of his facing bankruptcy as a result of his dealings with us. His people are fairly clamoring for the goods, and he is not going to pattern his methods after the Stonehaven Associated Charities. Do you know, the commercial life is most agreeable when one has a benevolent despot as a partner.'

The beach was almost as diverting and animated as Coney Island when a dozen phonographs were playing at once, a score of bicycles promiscuously entangled in head-on collisions, alarm clocks jangling on every hand, and the merry clickity-clack of sewing-machines in furious action sounding from under the shade trees. Arthur and Dick Mott were officially appointed field agents and demonstrators at the suggestion of the King, and they made many

pilgrimages to villages far and near, escorted by squads of royal troops, for the purpose of teaching the people how to use the products of Yankee ingenuity.

Returning from one of these enjoyable expeditions, Arthur ingenuously announced: 'We certainly had the time of our lives, visiting the King's town and looking over his establishment. Hasn't it struck you all as queer that he has never invited the ship's party to make the trip back to his own ranch? Of course he has made all sorts of polite excuses — hot weather and risk of fever, and the rough journey, and all that. But he was bluffing. He lives in a regular bamboo and stone fortress of a town, and his palace is as big as a hotel. Guess why he has seemed so inhospitable. Well, we had Batu Pang along with us, and he wormed it out of the household servants. The King's wives are a frightfully jealous lot, and Angela is the reason. They have heard all about her, and they think Rong Larok got so busy with the ship and the pepper crop because he lost his heart to her. Now, what do you think of that? They honestly believe that he is trying to buy Angela from Aunt Hester. And he has lost his nerve. He doesn't dare ask you to visit him for fear his matrimonial syndicate will jump the reservation and make it so hot for him that he will have to take to the tall timber. So much for the latest gossip from the smart set of Tomba.'

'I have a list of important errands that will keep Arthur out of mischief for some time,' said Miss Penfold. 'I have not forgotten the adventures entrusted to me by the children of Stonehaven, and Arthur must attend to these transactions at once. They will teach him something about trading methods, and I would not disappoint those youngsters for worlds. Wherever it is impossible to barter, you must take pepper in exchange and we will sell it at home for whatever profit can be obtained.'

Thereupon she gave to Arthur the precious memoranda beginning:

My Adventure. Eighty-seven cents and a new baseball bat. Please buy nutmegs with the money and swap the bat to a cannibal chief for a war-club. The bat cost me forty cents.

Arthur scanned the list rather dubiously and announced: 'I can dicker for most of this junk, but Dick Bremer has me stumped. He sends four dollars in cash and a case of shoes and wants firecrackers from China. How about a live Sumatra monkey — one of these intelligent-looking apes that comes down to the river-bank and swears at the ship every morning? Will that do for a compromise? As a real lively adventure the monkey proposition would run a close second to four dollars' worth of firecrackers.'

He was instructed to use his own judgment and departed in search of Dick Mott as a partner in this complicated undertaking. This episode of the childish 'adventures' brought Stonehaven vividly to mind and turned the thoughts of the party homeward. It seemed to herald the beginning of the end of the long exile on the coast of Sumatra. Already a spirit of holiday elation pervaded the ship. The tension of anxiety was lessened, the sailors sang at their work, and as for Miss Penfold she regarded the victory over hostile circumstances as good as won. The hold of the Nautilus was almost filled to the deck beams with bags of pepper, and Captain Fleming had begun to think of making ready for sea. Repairs had been completed after a rough-and-ready fashion, and, although the ship lacked the smart appearance of her departure from Stonehaven, he was confident of her ability to meet all hazards of the return voyage. It was considered unwise to proceed first to Batavia for supplies and final refitting because of the possible hostility of the Dutch officials touching the matter of the Deputy Resident from Karang and the lack of a trading

permit. Moreover, it was inadvisable to acquaint the merchants controlling the Far Eastern pepper market with the fact that the Nautilus had obtained a full cargo from the King of Tomba. If necessary, Mauritius, halfway across the Indian Ocean, could be used as a port of call, a suggestion that particularly pleased Miss Penfold because in the old days the ships of her family had been wont to visit that pleasant island when it was known as the Isle of France.

As for fresh provisions, parties sent by the King were carrying on board pigs, poultry, yams, mangosteens, bananas, in quantities to stock Noah's Ark itself and the storeroom of the ship contained a large amount of canned and dried and pickled wares in addition to the staples of a seagoing menu. There were no fickle or invalid appetites in the company, and living for perhaps three months longer on shipboard dismayed not even Miss Penfold. She was, indeed, very impatient to get to sea again, and all the dangers and hardships and tedium of the outward voyage were forgotten. She was wearing her rose-tinted spectacles once more and there was nothing in life to compare with the radiant promise of success of the Penfold adventure.

What might be called a breathing-spell was vouchsafed to the party in these last days in sight of the misty, mighty mountain range of Bukit Barissan. There were jolly picnics on shore, boating parties up the sluggish, silent river, excursions along the inland trails where the tangled creepers screened the sunlight and the air was as moist and still as that of a hothouse. King Rong Larok came seldom to the ship. Urgent affairs of state engaged his attention and he was compelled to make several journeys to his borders where the Dutch influence had been secretly at work to foment discontent. There was no need of his presence wherever the voice of the phonograph had been heard, but, in wild districts as yet unvisited by the magically delivered

oracle, he thought it wisdom to smother any restive symptoms. At length he sent word that he was about to pay a farewell visit to the Nautilus, and the preparations for sailing were hastened in order that he might witness the departure of the Penfold ship from his shores.

The night before the arrival of the King, Angela Breck and Ogden Haight chanced to meet on deck while the others were elsewhere employed in divers tasks having to do with the expected departure. The young man was no longer the bustling and indefatigable manager of 'The Penfold Trading Company, Limited.' That undertaking was as good as finished, and now Stephen Fleming, shipmaster, would again become the dominant figure in the drama of land and sea. Haight had done his duty, cheerfully, loyally, with all his might, but now he lagged superfluous as it seemed to him. And while he talked at random with Angela, he was sparring for time, trying to find words to say what he honestly felt in his heart.

'You are very pensive and absent-minded,' she remarked. 'The rest of us are very cheerful. And you have done so much to be proud of. Just think what this success means to Aunt Hester!'

'Oh, I have thought of nothing else than Aunt Hester for months and months,' he wearily replied. 'It is about time for me to give myself a thought or two. I have tried to play the game as well as I knew how, Angela, and I haven't been a quitter, have I? Of course a blind man could see how things have been going since we came to this coast. I mean, that for a while — well, I fooled myself into hoping — you know what, don't you? But now for me to tell you how much I love you is only to make you feel sorry for me. And I'd rather be taken out and shot than pitied, even by you.'

'I cannot give you the answer you think you would like to hear, Ogden, but I am engaged to no one else. This does

not help you, though, does it? I *am* sorry — not for you, but sorry that a disappointment should have to come after all you have done to save the adventure. It doesn't seem like a fair reward. Really, I am not worth sighing over.'

'I shall sigh as much as I please,' was the warm retort. 'That is my prerogative. All rejected suitors sigh like furnaces. But my sighs will not be heard on board the Nautilus. I am going to chuck it up, Angela, quit the field in which I was never better than a forlorn hope, and go home by steamer. And you and Miss Hester ought to do likewise. You need not go in the same boat with me if my sorrowful countenance is likely to worry you, but it would be much safer and quicker and more comfortable. Haven't you romanced around long enough with the Penfold adventure to tire of it?'

It was an artful trap and Angela scorned to avoid it. Hesitating only for a moment, she returned quite steadily: 'Aunt Hester must speak for herself, but I am sure she has set her heart on standing by the Nautilus until we tie up to Penfold Wharf. And I prefer to sail home with Captain Stephen Fleming. Isn't that what you expected me to say?'

'Your candor is simply beautiful, Angela. Yes, that is about what I expected to hear you say. Well, this ship can hold me no longer. Why should I sit around and suffer torments, besides being most confoundedly in the way. To-morrow the name of the captain's clerk will be scratched from the ship's articles.'

'Do you mean that we shall sail without you?' she exclaimed, puzzled and dismayed. 'This sounds as if you wished to be marooned.'

'Yes, I shall borrow a vessel of the King's Navee to take me to Batavia, from whence I take my departure to catch a P. and O. boat at Singapore. Never mind, I'll be on the

wharf to meet you in Stonehaven, arm in arm with those other has-beens, Captain Chester Burdick and Captain Andrew Claghorn.'

'And we shall still be old friends and shipmates?' she asked, very gently.

'Of course, I am quite used to the notion by this time. And after all, it is really a great thing that you should put it that way — after my miserable conduct early in the voyage — about Fleming, you know. So my stake in the adventure is not a total loss.'

'You deserve the very nicest girl in the world!' she exclaimed impulsively; 'and I hope and pray you may find her.'

'Very kind of you, I am sure,' he sighed. 'But no more romantic quests for the present, if you please. Now I am going to have a few words with our friend Fleming — yes, our friend, for I'm hanged if I can bring myself to hate him. There is nothing conventional about this voyage, is there?'

Angela had nothing to say to this very personal speech and discreetly withdrew. Fleming cut short a consultation with his mates and walked away with Haight, wondering what was in the wind.

'I'd like to be paid off and discharged in this port, if you please,' said the captain's clerk. 'My papers and accounts are all in shipshape order.'

'What — what — has happened to you?' stammered the other.

'The inevitable, the expected,' was the compact answer. 'Do you remember the very straight talk we had after I was cut down in the Wanderer scrimmage? I have done my best, but I lose. The better man wins. I want to go home by steamer. But before we part company, I must tell you that I bear you no hard feeling. You have played the game

like a man and I hope you think the same of me — that is, since you joined the ship.'

'We have weathered some rough times together,' said Fleming. 'And as I once told you, I am of the opinion that you have proved yourself the better man. I'll not argue the matter of your quitting the ship. That is your business. But I will say this much to you, and it is a tremendously awkward question to handle. The field is still clear — you know what I mean. And if disaster should overtake this voyage, homeward-bound, if the Penfold adventure should turn out a failure after all — and there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip — Stonehaven would never see me again. We are talking as man to man, and looking the facts between the eyes. And why not, after what we have been through together? Do you understand me? If the adventure smashes, I smash with it. I can't see it any other way.'

'Yes, I understand you, Fleming, but you do not understand some one else,' sadly murmured Haight. 'Your ideas of honor and loyalty and duty are bully, but you are standing in your own way. Well, this is an extraordinary conversation, by Jove.'

'This has been an extraordinary voyage,' said Stephen Fleming, with which they good-humoredly shook hands and went their separate ways.

When the high tide served early next morning, the Nautilus was towed through the channel by a string of native boats and anchored in the smooth sea beyond the bar. That tamed and devoted pirate, Batu Pang, acted as pilot for the last time and was exceedingly sorrowful of countenance as he waited to interpret the farewell words of the King before setting out for his home and family in Karang. Squatting on his heels beside Fleming, some comforting inspiration came to him, for, after gazing out to seaward

with the air of one who dreamed dreams and saw visions, he confidently imparted: 'The ship will come again. And the same captain will sail her back to Sumatra. My heart tell me this is a true word. And Batu Pang will come from Karang to make talk between the ship and the King.'

Fleming smiled and shook his head. There could be only one Penfold adventure, only one reincarnation of the brave days of old; but the mystical faith of the Malay could not be shaken. The ship had come again after seventy years and the cycle of her destiny was not yet completed.

Rong Larok the King was in no jovial humor when at length he came out to the ship in a proa of the royal navy, attended by a gorgeous retinue. The hour of farewell afflicted him with great sadness, he announced to his friends from Stonehaven, but their visit had brought him much joy and the debt of his father was not yet canceled. And in token of his allegiance to the Penfold flag he had brought some trifling gifts in remembrance. To Miss Penfold he gave a bracelet of hammered gold studded with the sapphires of Ceylon, and to Angela a flaming Burmese ruby worthy to be set in the crown of a king. There was also a letter written in Arabic, such a letter as his father before him had written, and it would be held as sacred and binding by the son, yea, by the grandson, of Rong Larok should ever a Penfold ship show the flag with the blue Maltese cross and the white background on the coast of Tomba.

'And there will be cargoes waiting,' said he — 'cargoes of pepper or coffee, tobacco, camphor, and cotton.'

Ogden Haight announced his intention of remaining behind, with the gracious permission of the King.

Fleming glanced aloft at the loosened sails. He was anxious to get clear of the coastwise reefs and islands and make an offing before night. The King perceived what was in the captain's mind and waved aside the warm-hearted

invitations to stay longer. With salutations grave and stately he made his round of farewells, lingering to say to Miss Penfold in his own tongue many words whose tones were so affectionate and sincere that they needed no translation. Then he went on board his proa which quickly made sail and moved off to windward, waiting to convoy the Nautilus out to the open sea. Ogden Haight had slipped away and preceded Rong Larok to the royal vessel, for his farewells had been said. Blithe and debonair was his manner as he flourished his straw hat while the proa slipped away beyond range of shouted messages.

'Up anchor,' said Fleming, and presently the capstan bars were manned to the refrain of the sing-song chantey:

O — Johnny's gone and I'll go too,
A — way you; he-lo-o!
O — Johnny's gone, what shall I do?
John's — gone — to — Hilo.

Soon the yards were clothed with canvas and the Nautilus stood out to sea, homeward-bound. Dipping and swinging over the swell, the King's proa swept abreast of the ship until the latter was drawing ahead as she felt the weight of the offshore wind. Then the guns of Rong Larok boomed a farewell salute and the doughty battery of the Nautilus was wreathed in powder smoke as those ancient but unterrified six-pounders returned the courtesy. The proa wheeled and went skimming back toward the bar, while the Penfold house-flag was thrice dipped from the masthead of the Nautilus.

CHAPTER XV

AT PENFOLD WHARF

Captain Chester Burdick was puffing along Sussex Street at a great rate of speed, and it is pleasing to narrate that now his two stout legs were mates and that he walked without limping. His 'busted spar' had been more cleverly spliced by the deft fingers of Angela Breck and Ogden Haight than his darkened outlook on life would admit when he dutifully abandoned the Nautilus at Capetown. On this brisk morning of early spring he was bound to the rooms of the Marine Society in search of Captain Andrew Claghorn, and between his fingers fluttered a slip of paper that bore the heading of a telegraph company. At sight of his fellow shipmaster, however, he artfully smoothed out his excited demeanor, thrust his hand behind his back, and made the commonplace remark:

''Morning, Andrew. Wind from the east'ard. I suppose it makes you feel kind of rheumatic and cranky.'

'No, I'm feeling spryer than 'most any time since I came home. Seen the "Herald" ship news this morning? Somebody stole my paper off the front step and I just arrived here when you hove in sight. Our vessel hasn't been reported, has she? Nobody spoke her at sea?'

'Not according to the "Herald," Andrew. She's long overdue. I look any day to see her posted as missing. Not a word since she left Capetown, and she ought to have been reported at Batavia a couple of months ago. What did we tell 'em? It makes me feel worse every day.'

'I haven't been sleeping sound for weeks,' said Captain Andrew, and his harsh, dour face was so heavy with

sadness that Captain Chester could dissemble no longer.

Displaying the bit of paper he shouted boisterously: 'You old fool, you! I can't keep up the joke one minute longer. She's still afloat. Here's a cablegram from Ogden Haight: "*Nautilus homeward-bound from Sumatra.*" Hip, hip, horay!'

'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,' piously ejaculated Captain Claghorn. 'All's well on board, I take it. If anybody was dead or missing he'd say so. "Homeward-bound from Sumatra." Umph! There hasn't been trade for American vessels on that coast in a half-century and more, Chester. What do you suppose they've gone and done? Got that far, realized how foolish they were not to take our advice sooner, and turned around and put for home, hey?'

'Maybe so. I don't expect they have found the fortune they were looking for, but the whole town will be thankful to see 'em home safe and sound with their ship under 'em. Business is lookin' up since the panic blew itself out, and if Hester Penfold is bringin' her cargo back, maybe she can get it taken off her hands with no great loss.'

'Well, we told them so, didn't we?' — and Captain Andrew nodded most sagely. 'Romances had better be left in the story-books where they belong.'

Through several weeks following there was endless talk and speculation among the eight surviving members of the Stonehaven Marine Society who threshed over the affairs of the Penfold adventure with interest suddenly revived. The voyages of their youth were recalled in voluminous detail in order to calculate the probable course and speed of the Nautilus and there were many professional disputes while her ocean track was tentatively traced on a series of charts tacked against the wall of the Society's reading-room. All conjecture and argument were overturned, however, when

Captain Burdick burst into an evening session with the violence of an explosion and announced at the top of his voice:

'Ogden Haight's in town. I was at the station when he got off the train and I thought I saw a ghost.'

A storm of questions and objections pelted Captain Burdick like hail.

'Has the vessel been wrecked?'

'Where in time was he picked up?'

'The ship couldn't ha' got home. It's all nonsense!'

'Where's the rest of 'em?'

'Is Miss Hester Penfold safe?'

Captain Burdick was trying to edge in a word of explanation, and at the first lull in the storm he declaimed most vehemently:

'You boys shut up! What's the matter with you? I'm cold sober and all I ask is a fair hearing. Haight came home from Batavia by steamer, ahead of the ship. You blockheads never thought of that. The others stuck by the ship. I was bettin' Andrew here that Haight would find his berth mighty uncomfortable after Fleming took command. The girl is at the bottom of it, though of course he doesn't say so.'

'But what about the voyage? Did they get a cargo?'

'Has Miss Penfold any show to break even?'

'What in thunder was the ship clearing from Sumatra for?'

'Are they all as crazy and moonstruck as ever?'

The interrogations came from different corners of the room and the bearer of tidings answered pettishly: 'One at a time! You sound like a cageful of parrots. I asked Haight about the voyage first thing. And he shut up tight and wouldn't tell me a word — me that took the vessel out o' here, and was clearly entitled to know. All I could cork-

screw out of him was that Andrew Claghorn and I had been mistaken in our judgments and that we were a precious pair of old foozelums, or words to that effect.'

'The cheeky young snippet!' spoke up Captain Andrew. 'Well, that means that Miss Penfold is fetching home some kind of cargo, doesn't it? "Mistaken in our judgments!" Umph! We certainly acted accordin' to our lights, and our lights pretty near went out, didn't they, Chester? And what's all this mystery about?'

'Doggone it, we have a right to know,' snapped Captain Burdick. 'But Haight is just plain exasperatin'. He as much as told me that if I had stood by the ship, I'd know a whole lot more than I do know.'

'Looks to me as if they'd made a fizzle of it and were ashamed to have it talked about,' suggested Captain Andrew. 'If they were comin' home with flyin' colors, Haight would be braggin' about it all over town. We told 'em so, didn't we, Chester?'

This theory was not sufficiently conclusive to end the matter, and one and two at a time the members of the Stonehaven Marine Society waylaid the captain's clerk of the Nautilus and strove to loosen his baffling taciturnity. He entertained them with the lively yarn of the fight with the schooner Wanderer, modestly slurring over his own part in the episode, and described the storm that had almost wrecked the Penfold adventure; but of the enforced visit to the coast of Sumatra he had nothing whatever to say. Even to the friends whom he met in glad reunion at the club, he was consistently secretive, and Billy Truelove, lazier and fatter and more good-natured than ever, was able to extract no more information than this:

'I'm not trying to make a melodrama of it, old man. Really I'm dying to tell you the whole thing, but it isn't my affair. The truth will be out before long. I am still working

for Miss Penfold's interests, you know, and I can afford to take no chances of spoiling the finale.'

'But you don't expect to win a big stake for her out of this preposterous voyage, do you? The thing is impossible. If she doesn't have to slap a mortgage on her house to pay the bills, she will play in luck. All right, I won't pester you. Keep the mystery to yourself and sit on the lid, for all I care. Now tell me some more about this Fleming man. Remember my telling you to look for "the dark man coming over the water"? I wasn't a bit surprised when old man Burdick and Claghorn turned up with the news that the vanished Stephen Fleming had come sailing into Table Bay in a sinking ship.'

'He is a corker,' carelessly affirmed Haight. 'We are good friends. I was all wrong in my first opinion.'

'That sounds to me as if you could afford to be magnanimous,' suggested Truelove. 'You wouldn't talk that way unless you had the better of him.'

'No, I lost on my own adventure, Billy, but we'll forget that part of it. Going to sea did me a tremendous lot of good. For one thing, it taught me that it is possible to respect the man who whips you in a fair fight. And there's a liberal education in itself.'

'Sorry, old man. I hoped you might win. But you are right about yourself. You are not the same chap who went away from here. All the crowd is talking about it and saying bully things of you. So I guess it was worth while.'

Shortly thereafter, Haight disappeared from this circle of admiring friends and quietly departed for New York, where he was very busy for several days. Then he headed westward and visited Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, and made a hasty flight to the Pacific Coast. Returning to Boston he plunged lavishly in the matter of telegraph and cable tolls and fairly swamped a stenographer in the volume of

daily correspondence by mail. A month of this sort of activity sufficed to clear his decks for action and beyond daily attendance at his office and a close watch on the reports sent in from various and widely scattered sources, he was free to wait with increasing impatience and anxiety for the arrival of the Nautilus. He could find no flaw in his plans which seemed certain of success if the ship should not be too long delayed.

One day slid into another, and no word came from the sea. With a fair passage the ship ought to be nearing her home coast and crossing the track of steamers whose masters would surely report sighting her. Haight arranged with ship news agencies in Boston and New York to telegraph him without delay. At length he said to himself as he tore another leaf from his desk calendar: 'Only a few days more to spare. By Jove, this is the closest finish yet. I wonder I don't fly into a thousand pieces. Here is where I make or break the Penfold adventure.'

Twenty-four hours later this message was delivered:

Steamer British Prince reports Nautilus signaled all well. Passed Tuesday. Latitude and longitude show position then six hundred miles from Boston Light.

Haight sprang to the telephone and called up the manager of the Boston Towing and Wrecking Company.

'How soon can you have a tug ready for sea?' said he. 'I want to pick up a ship bound to Stonehaven from the Cape of Good Hope. Yes, she has been reported. She ought to be close by unless she's unlucky enough to get blown offshore. What are your terms? No, she is not disabled. Simply a towing job. All right. Can't start tonight? Oh, confound it! First thing in the morning? Well, let it go at that. I'll be on board bright and early.'

Haight was whistling joyfully as he ran to catch a train to Stonehaven and an hour later he raced down Sussex

Street like a schoolboy. Halting to look in at the Marine Society Rooms, he found that the two old captains had gone home to supper, wherefore he wrote a note to Captain Burdick asking him to notify Andrew Claghorn that the Nautilus was nearing port, and inviting them to join him on the tug. Having many things to do, Haight hurried from one errand to another and was almost ready to take a late train back to Boston when Captain Burdick hailed him over the telephone and spluttered:

'I've been making a stern chase after you this whole blessed evening. Great news, isn't it? Of course, Andrew and I will be tickled to death to join you. Say, I just got a telegram from New York. Guess who it's signed by? McCann and Williams, sure as I'm standing here. You recall the two men that helped Fleming sail Reuben Doane's ship to port? They saw the ship news report in to-night's paper, and they're comin' on to Stonehaven, slam-bang, quick as they can, by the midnight train to Boston. Seems as if they ought to be on deck to meet Fleming and his ship, doesn't it? What shall I wire 'em?'

'Tell them to come along,' was Haight's answer. 'Have them hustle to Long Wharf from the train and I'll hold the tug an hour or so. This is great!'

The powerful seagoing tug Dauntless lay waiting with steam up when Haight boarded her shortly after daylight. Captain Burdick and Captain Claghorn arrived a few minutes later and frequently hauled out their watches while they kept a vigilant eye lifted at the landward end of the wharf. The expected guests, late of the Ticonderoga, had no intention of delaying the departure a second longer than possible, and it seemed as if their train could have no more reached the South Station than a cab whirled in from the street, came bounding along the wharf with two horses at the gallop, and was pulled up barely in time to avoid

plunging overboard. From one door out popped the burly figure of 'Bucko' McCann, from the other the wisp of an Englishman, as if they had been ejected by the explosion of a bomb in the vehicle.

'Ye earned it, me lad!' cried McCann, tossing a crumpled bill to the driver. 'You're a man of your word. I may have traveled faster, but I niver was bumped higher nor came down harder.'

''Twas a bloomin' sight more excitin' than that comical voyage in the old hooker,' said Williams. 'My respects to you, Mr. Haight.'

He scraped his foot and took off his hat, while McCann was shaking hands all round and shouting at the ancient skippers: 'Last time we met was when I said good-bye to ye in the Capetown hospital. An' here we are again! Hope we didn't delay the towboat. To think of passing a line to Cap'n Fleming! And we sure have the good news for him!'

As the party scrambled over the guard-rail of the Dauntless, Haight asked: 'And what is the good news? Come forward where we can sit down.'

The lines were cast off and the tug churned her way down the harbor as McCann found a comfortable seat on a locker in the port-house and beamingly informed the party:

'It's not given out yet, but the salvage case is goin' damned strong for us. The court is waitin' for Captain Fleming's testimony as a matter of red-tape or some such nonsinse. But the owners get soaked to the queen's taste. The wise and benivolint court, winkin' its left eye very solemn and judicious, presumes that we three knew nothin' about the cargo of the Ticonderoga bein' faked, do y' see, and therefore we are entitled to salvage for savin' it as well as the ship. It's wan way to sting the gints that put up the job. Annyhow, Captain Fleming and Williams and me will split up a matter o' some sixty thousand dollars

bechune the three of us. Of course Williams agrees with me that we ought to take the short end of it, leavin' the long end of it for Captain Fleming.'

'If you want to dodge trouble with Captain Fleming, you will do exactly as he tells you,' said Haight. 'I'm delighted to hear of your good fortune, but I am very sure he will insist on an equal division of the booty.'

'He's that kind, all right,' returned McCann, 'but we are primed to make a knock-down and drag-out of it before we surrinder our principles.'

This bone of contention was laid aside for the time and Haight spun the yarn of the death of Captain Reuben Doane, which supplied a topic for discussion until the tug was clear of the harbor and slanting off across the bay. Finding the Nautilus was a game of hide-and-seek, particularly when night came on and she had not been sighted. Her lucky star was still in the ascendancy, however, and, shortly after breakfast next morning, the upper sails of a full-rigged ship gleamed off to the southward. The Dauntless turned to cross her track, and as soon as it was perceived that the ship was heading to the northward of Boston with a quartering wind, the Stonehaven skippers were certain that this was the Nautilus, standing in for her home port.

As the hard-driven tug snored through the long, easy swells, at a twelve-knot gait, the ship rose swiftly into view until the observers could make out the shapely sheer of her black hull and the checkered line of her painted ports.

'The Nautilus. God bless her!' roared Captain Burdick. 'And a prettier vessel never floated. The Devil take this age of steel troughs with engines in 'em. You folks don't realize it, but I never had a chance to stand off and look at this ship under sail when I was master of her.'

'I thought you was done with romancin',' grumbled Cap-

tain Claghorn. 'I want to know what's inside of that vessel. Her looks won't win back the money that was squandered on her.'

'You will know before long,' said Haight. 'As soon as we get a line aboard and are cock-sure of making Stonehaven without any mishaps, I'll be ready to tell all I know. But Miss Penfold ought to be told first of all.'

'Well, I hope with all my heart it's good news,' said Captain Burdick.

Soon the tug was indicating that she wished to speak the Nautilus, which was smartly hove-to with mainyard aback. Ogden Haight stared at the quarterdeck through the glasses snatched from a rack in the wheel-house. Yes, there they were, Miss Penfold and Angela standing along the rail, Fleming apart from them, giving orders for the management of the ship. This fortuitous grouping impressed Haight as symbolic. Was duty still keeping Fleming and Angela apart? Well, there would be no more need of it. The Penfold adventure was almost in harbor. Haight sighed, gazed long and yearningly at the figure of Angela Breck and tried to find comfort in the verdict of Billy Truelove: 'You are not the same chap who went away from here. All the crowd is talking about it and saying bully things of you. So I guess it was worth while.'

'And it is cold comfort at that,' he said to himself. 'But beggars cannot be choosers.'

A boat was dropped overside from the lower deck of the tug and he jumped in, followed by the other members of the reception committee, who hailed the ship in a mighty chorus, the voice of 'Bucko' McCann loudest of all as he bellowed: 'The Ticonderogas welcome ye home, Captain Fleming! The three of us is disgracefully rich men. Do ye get that?'

'Glad to hear it, and just as glad to see you two old ship-

mates,' returned the master of the Nautilus. 'All well here, and what we want to know is the price of pepper.'

'Wait until I get aboard,' sung out Haight. 'The captain's clerk is still on the job. I've come out to give you a tow into Stonehaven. Will you make ready to take our line?'

The boat was dancing alongside the still ship, and as Haight scrambled on board Miss Penfold was heard to protest: 'But we want to sail into Stonehaven Harbor, straight up to the old wharf. A tugboat will spoil the final picture.'

'Romancin' just as busy as ever,' muttered Captain Claghorn. 'She is a most remarkable woman for her years.'

'Pepper!' snorted Captain Burdick. 'Did you hear him ask the price of pepper, Andrew? What in time do they expect to do with it? Almost might as well come home in ballast. But I suppose there was no use expectin' to find a grain of common sense aboard after we left the ship.'

These adverse criticisms were drowned in the joyous hubbub of the deck as Williams, McCann, and Haight shook hands with every one from the skipper to Dick Mott, while at least a dozen people were talking at once. Presently the whistle of the tug blew a series of impatient blasts and Fleming turned inquiringly to Miss Penfold for orders.

She was about to repeat her disapproval of this prosaic, modern method of making port when Ogden Haight intervened to say with the most high-handed assurance: 'A nor' west gale might blow you out to sea even from here and you would be weeks working back to Stonehaven. You must take the tow, for we can afford to run no more chances. I will explain just as soon as we can find a quiet corner.'

'I think he may know more about it than we do,' quietly suggested Fleming. 'With your permission, Miss Penfold,

I will call the sailing voyage finished, and tell the tug to take us home.'

He waved his hand to the Dauntless and her boat promptly returned with the end of the towing hawser. The crew of the ship mounted aloft and began to furl sail for the last time. Miss Penfold was anxiously waiting for an explanation, but Ogden Haight had escaped her to have a word with Angela, who was listening to the flatteries of that gallant admirer 'Bucko' McCann.

'By Jove, Angela,' said Ogden, 'how stunningly fit you are looking! Did you miss me very much? I was afraid you might pine and fade. Now that I am back on the old deck with the dear old crowd, I can't in the least realize that we parted months ago with the King of Tomba banging a farewell salute. Was it a pleasant voyage homeward-bound?'

'A delightful voyage, Ogden,' said she, and her smile was frankly affectionate. 'And what news did you find in Stonehaven?'

'The greatest news you ever heard,' cried Arthur, as he came rushing up. 'Yale won the football game, ten to nothing. Of course it happened last fall, but it doesn't sound a bit stale to me.'

'It hadn't occurred to me as important news,' dryly observed Haight. 'However, you are entitled to a belated celebration, youngster, so load the six-pounders and turn loose when the ship passes Stonehaven Light. Captain Fleming won't object.'

'Now run away and practice your college cheer, Arthur,' said Angela. 'It must be very rusty.'

With a vociferous war-whoop by way of practice, the exiled Freshman vanished to seek the coöperation of Dick Mott, and Angela asked, a little fearfully: 'What about our cargo, Ogden? Have you said anything to Aunt Hester?'

'I haven't had a chance,' said he. 'At the ordinary price of bulk pepper, as controlled by the market abroad, the adventure would stand to win about what has been put into it. That is, Miss Hester could recover the cost of buying her outward cargo.'

'I am very thankful to hear that, and I am sure she will think it all she dared hope for, although, of course, she has been building all kinds of air castles founded upon the family records of the old days of the Stonehaven pepper trade.'

Haight tried to banish a mischievous twinkle and added very demurely: 'Yes, it might have turned out much worse. There is a trifle more to explain, and, as captain's clerk, though I am no longer on the ship's articles, I think I ought to report first to the owner, Miss Hester.'

It was difficult to gain an audience, however, for Miss Penfold was describing the voyage in great detail to Captain Burdick and Captain Claghorn, whose professional interest inspired many interruptions which drifted off into reminiscent comment of one kind or another.

'But what we can't figure out,' Captain Burdick was declaiming, 'is why Ogden Haight has been so doggoned mysterious about your foolin' around Sumatra all that time. I've felt like takin' him by the collar and shakin' his teeth loose, he has been that exasperatin'; isn't it so, Andrew?'

Just then Fleming joined the group, but had little to say. This home-coming was more momentous to him than he cared to show to the inquisitive old shipmasters. His work was done. Win or lose, the Penfold adventure was no longer in his keeping. There were careworn lines in his tanned, resolute face and the boyish smile was not so frequent as when he had last seen Stonehaven. Ogden Haight knew what must be in his mind and was no longer to be hindered from revealing his secret.

'Miss Hester Penfold, I take great pleasure in informing you,' he began with a touch of grandiloquence, then laughed and went on more informally — 'Oh, pshaw, I'd better break it gently and begin at the beginning. I'll miss half my fun if I tell it all at once.'

'And I shall have an attack of heart failure if you trifle with my feelings,' put in Miss Penfold.

'Very well, then. Coming home I tarried in London long enough to look over the pepper situation, and then ran across to Holland to prowl among our dear old friends the Dutch. I was surprised to find that nobody took any stock in the rumor that an American ship was loading pepper on the coast of Sumatra. You see, just because nobody else had been impertinent enough to attempt it, therefore it could not be done. And I fancy that our partner, Rong Larok, helped to keep the matter hushed up, thinking that secrecy might be to our advantage. Anyhow, I kept it dark, you may be sure, for what do you imagine was going on over there?'

After a breathless moment of dramatic suspense, he took pity and continued: '*A corner in pepper.* A Yankee speculator from Chicago was showing the English pepper importers how to engineer the deal, and between them they had gained control of about all the pepper in storage besides contracts covering the Singapore and Batavia deliveries of this year. In fact, they could put the price of pepper just wherever they decided to boost it.'

'*A corner in pepper*,' murmured Miss Penfold.

'Precisely. Now, pepper is one of the universal necessities, and as soon as the wholesale grocers and importers in the United States were cleaned out of the stock in hand, they found that prices had gone sky-rocketing. There was no trace of the New England conscience in the methods of the pepper corner and, presto, the price per pound had been

doubled, with worse robbery to come. I kept in touch with the situation, and made a trip that covered the important distributing centers of this country. When I got back to Boston, the price of pepper had been increased another hundred per cent. Then I began to take orders at a price that cut under the London quotations, but gave us a profit to make your head swim. The whole thing was done very quietly. I could get no more than thirty days' leeway for making good on my contracts, because my customers had to have pepper even at 'Trust' prices. But they consented to give me this much grace, and of course they were all eager to smash the corner and to reap the advantage of my selling price.'

The young Napoleon of the pepper market paused to receive the enthusiastic plaudits of his audience and modestly explained:

'The Stock Exchange had taught me a few things about swinging this sort of deal. The rules of the game are the same, whether in wheat or stocks or pepper. Get rid of your holdings for the best price you can make without smashing your market to smithereens. This is the most enjoyable moment of my life, so be patient if I am slow in coming to the climax. Now you understand why I was so anxious to tow the Nautilus to port and have that cargo of pepper safely warehoused at the earliest possible moment.'

'There never was a captain's clerk like you,' said Miss Penfold — 'not even in my grandfather's ships.'

'And now, ladies and gentlemen, shipmates and fellow adventurers,' proclaimed Ogden Haight as he consulted a small memorandum book, 'my calculations show that the profits of this old-fashioned voyage, which flew in the face of all sane opinion, will amount to two hundred thousand dollars after paying all operating expenses. And our dear

friend and owner, Miss Hester Penfold, will have this sum of money to help restore the fortune that she lost and that she so bravely sought to recover in the Penfold adventure. And, besides this, she owns the good ship Nautilus.'

'And the finest, truest, most splendid friends that ever woman had,' tearfully murmured Miss Penfold. 'Oh, you must not think I have been greedy for the money. I have not been so selfish as that. It was winning the game, making the dream come true. And while I am not as rich in money as when we sailed, yet I have more than I shall ever want, and I am far richer in friendships and in happiness and in contentment and in satisfaction than all the wealth in the world could give.'

Impulsively she kissed Angela on both cheeks and most ingenuously declared: 'And I am so tremendously happy for your sake. I don't mean because you are an heiress once more — oh, what am I saying?'

She turned to look for Stephen Fleming, but he had fled the group and found important business with his first mate. The ship was surging in the wake of the tug at so rapid a gait that if all went well Stonehaven Light would be abeam by nightfall. The thought of forsaking the Nautilus brought no joy to her master. She was like a stanch and faithful friend and her decks were more like home to him than was any place on shore. Nor was there any niche on land that he could fill. He belonged at sea, on blue water. and now for the first time since the departure he ceased to live in the present and took thought of the future. 'Great heavens! I never thought of that,' he said to himself as he recalled the frank speech of Miss Penfold. 'Does she suppose I was waiting to find out whether Angela was an heiress as one result of the adventure? And can Angela believe that of me? I intend to find out before this ship ties up to the wharf.'

There was no opportunity for such an interview through the afternoon and Fleming's misgivings waxed more disquieting. At sea he had possessed more confidence in himself, but the prospect of being adrift in Stonehaven was rather appalling, and, while he might have made a gallant figure on the coast of Sumatra, there was nothing about him now to dazzle Angela and perhaps she was regretting her exceeding frankness. It was Ogden Haight who had made the adventure successful. He was the sort of man for such a girl to marry. He was to the manner born and harmonized perfectly with the social environment in which Angela had always lived. Fleming almost worried himself into believing that he was no more than an incident in a closed chapter of romance, the glamour of which had made him seem something else than he really was.

The sun was setting when the broken, rugged shore line just to the southward of Stonehaven bar loomed over the ship's bow and the tug turned to pass the outermost channel buoy to starboard. The old stone lighthouse that had welcomed home the vanished fleets of East-Indiamen flashed the first beam of its night's vigil toward the Nautilus and the Penfold house-flag. The tug crept slowly inside the harbor whose curving outline began to twinkle with a myriad electric lights, proclaiming that modernity was very close at hand.

While the others stood gazing at the lights of the town, Angela Breck had walked slowly across the deck and was looking seaward as if contemplating rather the days that were past than those that were to come. When Stephen Fleming came to her, she looked up at him, silently, as if expecting him.

'Shall you be glad to go ashore?' said he, low-voiced and grave.

'Yes, and no,' she replied. 'And you?'

'I hardly know what to say to that. It all depends on you. I love you, Angela. I told you so once before, but I have loved you more and more every day since then, every day that we have been sailing home together. And I was thinking all the time that when the Penfold adventure was won, my adventure might be won with it. But things seem so different now. I seem to have no right to love you.'

'I have not changed since then, Stephen, only to love you more,' was her answer. 'After fairly flinging myself at your head, I shall not flinch from the truth.'

Her hand rested in his hard palm as he bent a little to read her upturned face. The blessed darkness obscured them even from the man at the wheel, and he kissed her with a kind of reverent tenderness that stirred the profoundest depths of her heart. Then his broad shoulders were braced flat and taut and all the old easy confidence had returned as he told her with his boyish laugh:

'And I was afraid to go ashore, moping over the future, discontented with the past. Afraid? When the most wonderful, beautiful girl God ever made is glad to be a sailor's sweetheart? You have made a poor bargain, Angela, and you deserve a better ending for your adventure, but if I don't make good weather of life's voyage with you as mate, it will not be for lack of trying. Do you know that I loved you long before the Nautilus went to sea? I was sure of it when I went to New York, when we walked down to Penfold Wharf that Sunday afternoon.'

'Your discovery was not unique,' she murmured. 'I was in a very harrowing state of mind when you said good-bye to me. But you are not going to sea without me again. I could not bear it. Promise me that, won't you?'

The tormenting problem returned even in this supreme moment of his happiness.

'I want to promise,' he said very slowly. 'But a man's

work has to be done. You wouldn't have me idle ashore, living on my salvage money from the Ticonderoga. And I am good for nothing else than a berth at sea.'

'You and I have been so dutiful, positively superhuman, that I refuse to discuss such practical matters,' said Angela. 'I might tell you, though, that while you thought you were such a martyr to duty all the way home, you were really making love to me and didn't know it. Poor man, you never looked at me that I didn't read the message as clearly as if you had shouted it across the deck.'

His accents were slightly grieved as he replied in self-defense: 'I couldn't help it, but I certainly tried to be a martyr. And I know I was mighty poor company.'

'You need not try to hide it from me any more. I shall be mortally offended unless you tell me that you love me every time the ship's bell strikes. Oh, dear, there will be no more ship's bell and dog-watches and all the precious associations that are a part of you.'

He was silent while they watched the ship swing out of the channel toward the shadowy mass stretching far out from shore, the warehouses of Penfold Wharf. Lanterns were moving to and fro and a faint cheer came down the wind. Miss Penfold left her other shipmates and joined Stephen and Angela, saying with a silver note of laughter in her voice:

'I did not mean to be an eavesdropper and I heard only a few words. God bless you, my children. Now my dream has all come true. No, not all. The most wonderful scheme has come to me and I must tell you before we reach the wharf and meet the friends who have come down to welcome the adventure. You must come out of the clouds for a moment. I know that Stephen is wondering how he is to pick up his career again, and I am sure that you, Angela, will never consent to let him go to sea without you.

You are to remain in command of the Nautilus, Captain Fleming. And you will trade with Rong Larok, King of Tomba.'

'Oh, Aunt Hester, this is Stonehaven. Stephen and I must be practical persons hereafter. We can't afford to be anything else.'

'I was never more practical in my life, not even when I conceived the idea of the Penfold adventure,' was the emphatic rejoinder. 'I cannot bear to have the ship broken up or dismantled. Rong Larok has given us a trading privilege that can be turned into a handsome fortune for you children. Stephen has his share of the Ticonderoga salvage to invest as his own adventure. I intend to give Angela at least as much more as her dowry, and I shall be delighted to send an adventure in specie of my own. As for the ship, I propose to give her to Captain and Mrs. Stephen Fleming as a wedding present.'

Swept off their feet, the objects of this bewildering solicitude stared first at Miss Penfold, then at each other, and waited for her to continue, which she proceeded to do with the utmost animation.

'If Stephen should become master of an Atlantic liner, he would be no more than a servant hired for beggarly wages, and his wife must live on shore. On the other hand, my plan is dignified, independent, and lucrative. By making one voyage a year and investing your own capital with Rong Larok, you should clear at least fifty thousand dollars. My father and my grandfather and my great-grandfather made their fortunes in that manner. I advise you not to trust entirely to pepper. The market may not be cornered again.'

'It sounds immensely practical, and, what is much more to the point, I shall not be separated from Stephen,' observed Angela, more and more radiant.

'In a few years you will have amassed a fortune large enough to enable you to retire and become a shipping merchant, or engage in any other pursuit you choose,' resumed Miss Penfold, 'which is precisely according to family precedent. And Rong Larok deserves the credit for the inspiration. He has made the way plain.'

'We have a beautiful home in this ship, Stephen, made ready for us with every comfort,' said Angela with an emotion that tugged at her heartstrings. 'And it is more like home to me than any other place in the world, more than Aunt Hester's house, and she will not mind my saying it, just because it has been your home for so long. I want to carry out her plan. It is perfectly feasible.'

'But what of all your friends and associations in Stonehaven?' stammered Fleming. 'I can't let you give up everything for me. There will be no society for you, none of the things you have been used to all your life —'

'Oh, you great, handsome, stupid sailor!' — and Angela boldly patted his cheek. 'What in the world else do I want except you and a home with you, and see you happy and prospering in your world? I don't care if I never see another automobile or fritter my time at another afternoon tea.'

'It sounds like heaven to me,' said Fleming. 'I must leave you and look after mooring my ship. "Bucko" McCann shall go as mate, and we'll put Dick Mott in the fo'c'sle until he has pegged away at his books long enough to get his officer's papers. I'll be ready to take you ashore in a little while.'

Ogden Haight drifted toward them and pensively remarked: 'I assume that congratulations are appropriate. I helped Miss Hester work out some of the details of the future career of the Nautilus. Hope you like it. If one de-

cides to play the rôle of a faithful friend, he might as well be consistent and go the limit.'

'Yes, congratulations are permissible,' said Angela. 'And there never was a friend so faithful and fine as you.'

'I have heard things that pleased me less,' was the reply. 'You will find your house open and ready, with a staff of servants waiting for you to set the domestic machinery going, Miss Hester. I looked after all that, don't you know.'

'Ogden Haight, you are a jewel!' ardently exclaimed Miss Penfold. 'If it were not for the slight disparity in years, I should throw convention to the winds and ask you to marry me.'

'If I had not sworn a vow to die a bachelor, I should accept you on the spot,' he returned.

The Nautilus was swinging into her berth beside the wharf. From the ancient warehouses came a fragrance, faint and spicy, that recalled the breezes wafted from the forests and lowlands of the far-away kingdom of Tomba. Once again a Penfold ship had come safely home with a rich freightage in her hold, borne from the other side of the world. Friendly voices were shouting from the wharf, some of them piping in childish treble:

'Oh, Miss Hester, did you bring my 'venture?'

'Could you find the cannibal chief's war-club for me?'

'Did my setter pup get seasick and what did you swap him for?' Miss Penfold wiped her eyes and tremulously murmured to Angela: 'Bless their hearts, tell them that their adventures were all attended to. I — I believe I am going to cry. It is pure joy, my dear child. I — I am very glad to be home again.'

Fleming was passing and he halted to say: 'The ship is all fast and the voyage is over. Was it as successful as you hoped, Miss Hester?'

'There never was a Penfold adventure to compare with it,' said she.

'Except ours, Stephen,' whispered Angela, as she moved close to his side. 'And our voyage, the voyage that shall never end, has not yet begun.'

THE END

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THE PENFOLD ADVENTURE

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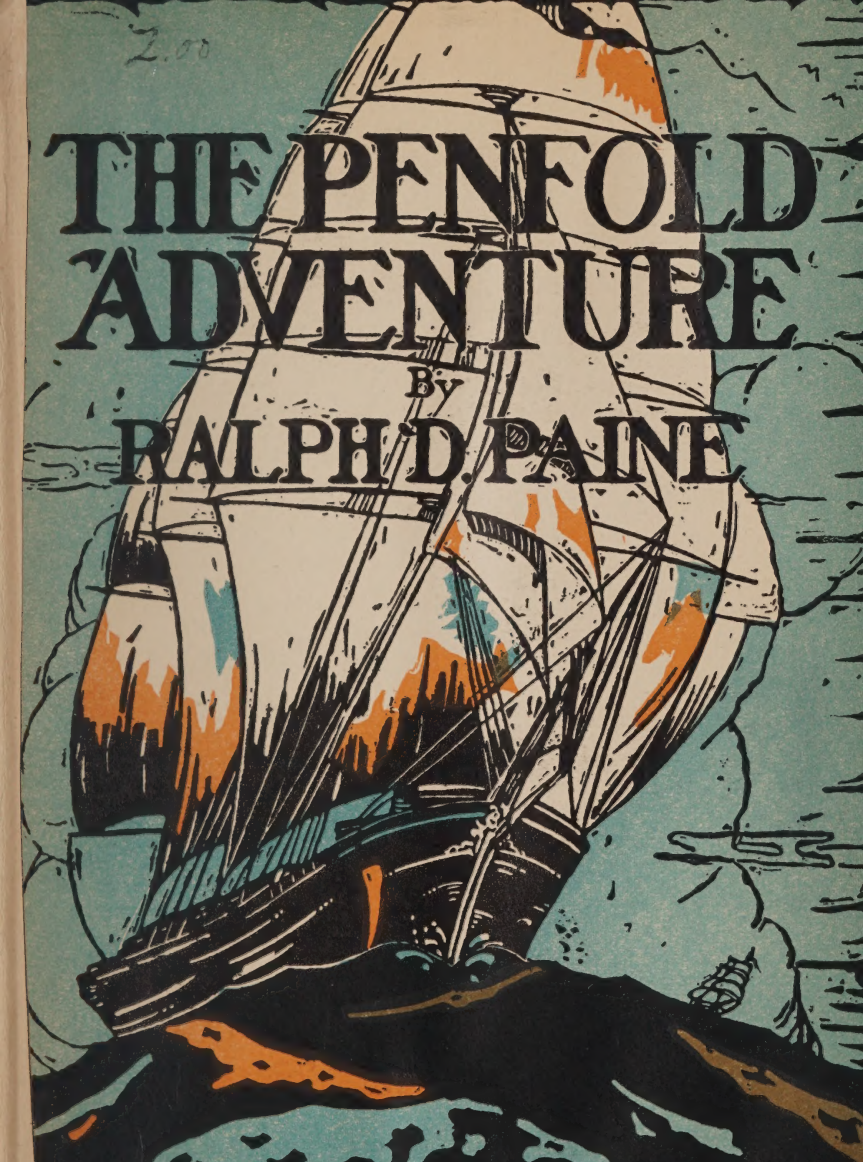

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